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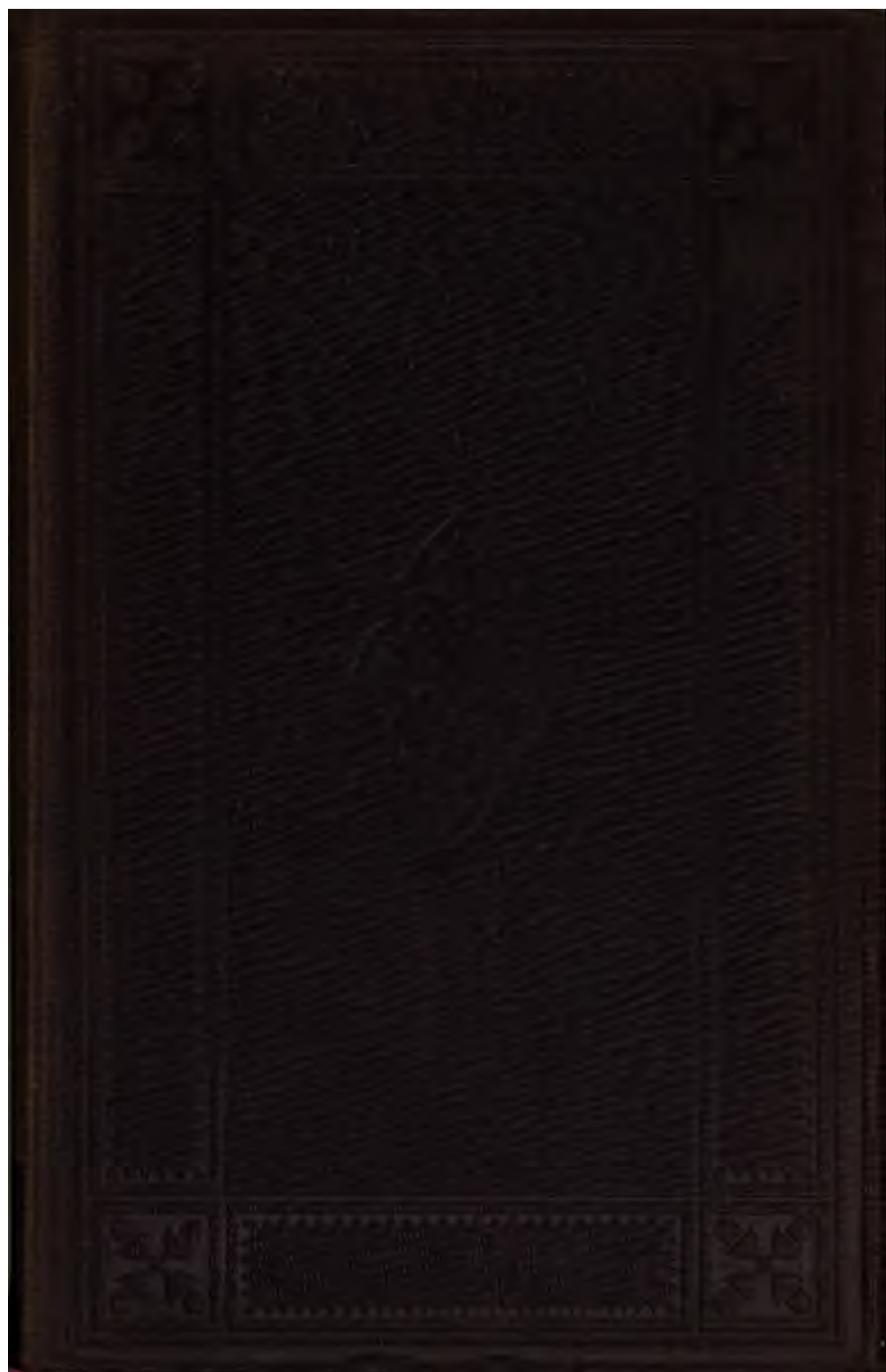
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**E PRIEST.**

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**1. SCENES OF  
DEGLI AMIDRI."**

**ES.**

**PUBLISHER,  
SQUARE.**



# THE HOME AND THE PRIEST.

AN ITALIAN TALE.

BY GIROLAMO VOLPE,

AUTHOR OF

"MEMOIRS OF AN EX-CAPUCHIN ; OR, SCENES OF  
MONASTIC LIFE IN ITALY." "LA TRADITA DEGLI AMIDDI,"  
&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,  
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1860.

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249. y. 99.



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# THE HOME AND THE PRIEST.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE TEMPEST PASSES OVER THE GARDEN OF  
LIFE, LEAVING DESOLATION IN ITS TRACK.

THE beautiful dreams of love had vanished, the joys which the noble fancies of youth had pictured to itself had fled for ever. The smile which had promised to gladden the blessed communion of two hearts, and embellish the future life of the noble youth and loving maiden, was exchanged for the smile of desperation. No longer did flowers spring up in Francesco's pathway. No more did he respire the blessed air of pure felicity in the delights of a love equally

fervent and innocent. His path in life was strewn with thorns and briars, and sharp edged stones, and was rough and difficult, traversing a region of desolation and sadness, whence hope was for ever banished. Henceforward life is a desert for him. His eye so bright with courage, and sparkling with intelligence, is now dull and rayless. His bold and open forehead, denoting self confidence, is clouded with melancholy. Grief sits there, darkening it with heavy shadows ; not one ray of consoling light beams upon it. The lines of his face are severe and rigid with the compressed agony of his soul. His rare smile is still benevolent, but so replete with grief that it expresses infinite, irrevocable desolation of spirit. His words are few, tardy, brief—no longer characterized by the accents of manly eloquence which formerly rejoiced and ennobled those who were privileged to listen to them. His long hair falling below his ears shows inattention to personal appearance, almost amounting to neglect. His dress is strangely careless, and like a troubled spirit, he retires to the most solitary and desolate spots, to indulge in his sad self-communings. Among living beings he

seems an immaterial form, destined to wander in the solitude of death, wearing a sepulchral expression of desolate sadness.

He is not the Francesco of a few days previously, but the anguish of his soul is contracted without any external show. True grief is not seen in the face, does not waste the corporeal frame, exhales not itself in querulous complainings. True grief sits in the soul, as in isolation and solitude—solemn, equable and constant, and preys on the spirit only, not on the body. Grief is not passion: it is the sister of death, and death is unimpassioned. In the reality of grief images fade, and affections, and hopes. The man in his spirit is dead, he lives only in his material form, though the body assumes no apparent signs of change. He remained alone in the desolation of his heart, leading a miserable and inert life, lacking a purpose to urge him to cheerfulness and activity.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE NUPTIAL CHAMBER.

IN a bedroom of the house of Count Alfredini is a man of tranquil mien, smiling countenance, and serene eye. He is pallid, though not with the pallor of suffering, but with the delicacy indicating want of vital energy. The patient gives no sign of pain, for he does not suffer. He shows no symptoms of melancholy, for he feels no depression of spirits. He manifests no impatience, for, in his slow and perhaps consuming malady, he does not experience any morbid inquietudes. His complaint bears no resemblance to the excitement of fever and its attendant irritability. If he sometimes feels wearied with his condition, an angel is by to mitigate the tedium, and to render the sick-chamber not only bearable,

but enjoyable. This angel stands near him now, wearing the form of a lovely girl, of graceful and ethereal figure, and face of celestial beauty. Her beauty a few months since was laughing and vivacious, her face suffused with the tints of gladness, and marked by the total absence of care and trouble. Now it is a saddened and subdued beauty. Paleness is habitual, and melancholy is ever visible on the lovely lip, notwithstanding that it wears a sweet smile. Hers is now the beauty of suffering marked by resignation. Her forehead is calm and serene—but stamped there are the traces of suppressed grief, greatly enhancing its loveliness. The eye is calm and grave ; it indicates no internal strife, but complete solitude of soul. The words of this most beautiful woman are few, and never uttered unnecessarily ; but they fall in soft tones, which tell of Christian affection and of inexhaustible patience—not of love. But the patient is satisfied. Her solicitude to anticipate his wishes and apply remedies is unwearied. With the vigilant and delicate assistance of such an attendant, the illness of years is enviable. The invalid is Count Alfredini, his watchful



nurse the Countess Alfredini, who has been his bride for some weeks.

The excitement and emotion produced upon that weak mind, so unequal to all exertion, reacted upon his feeble constitution, and he was taken ill on the day of his marriage. His disease was slow, not violent, but he kept his bed, unable to overcome the attack. His progress was so slow that it seemed doubtful if he would ever be strong again.

Our simple picture is completed by the addition of a third figure. The features of that face are strongly defined. The eye is powerful in its intense and expressive glance. The masculine decision of the lineaments, and the majestic bearing of the person, with the vigour of limb and muscle, apparent even beneath the long black priestly cassock, form a fine contrast to the insignificant expression of the invalid's face, and the delicacy and grace of the Countess's aspect. It was the handsome and severe countenance of Don Giuseppe. He appeared perfectly composed to the eye of the other two occupants of the room, but he was far from feeling so. Though his internal agitation was

well concealed, it might perchance have been divined by any one who watched him closely.

His eye followed the movements of the Countess, as if fascinated, while she glided around her husband. The Count paid no heed to Don Giuseppe, but watched Amalia with almost childish ecstasy. His glance spoke not of love, for he was not capable of the sentiment, or did not dare to entertain it; but his eye expressed admiration. His affection was a mixture of brotherly confidence, placid attachment, and timidity. She seemed to him an angelic being, and he looked at her as a child regards an object which he considers supernatural.

But a profane look of tremendous and indomitable passion was cast upon her by the priest. It was a look that seemed to envelope her angelic form in the flames pouring from the burning centre of his dark contracted pupil.

His glance was unobserved by either the Count or Countess.'

## CHAPTER III.

## A NEW PIECE OF SIMPLICITY IN A BIGOT.

THE sick man was the first to break the silence. With perfect simplicity and ingenuousness, he said, "Don Giuseppe, do you believe in dreams?"

These words occasioned the Countess an acute sensation of pain, and a shudder ran through her veins. She believed in them too surely! She was herself a living witness of their effects. She believed, and must for ever believe, in them. Don Giuseppe involuntarily glanced at her. Her hand trembled as she offered to the Count the tonic potion intended to renovate his wasted strength. The pallor of her cheek increased to perfect discoloration, and the priest's heart exulted. He scarcely knew how to reply to the Count's question. He was unwilling to give a

direct answer, fearful of saying anything inopportune, he therefore simply answered,

"That depends on circumstances. Why?"

"Because," answered the Count, "I had a dream last night that troubled me very much, and I want to consult you about it."

Don Giuseppe replied, "Dreams may be either the hallucinations of an agitated mind, or warnings from heaven, or the promptings of the adversary."

"Well, I believe," said the simple dreamer, "that mine was a warning from heaven. I will just tell you my dream, and you shall judge; and my dear Countess too shall give us her opinion."

"Oh, I cannot say anything about it," answered she, in a voice betraying her agitation. "Let the chaplain again perform his office—he will perhaps be able to turn it to as good account as the last."

"I thought," said the Count, "that I was dead."

"Oh, do not say so, my dear," exclaimed his wife, prompted by the impulse of her affectionate heart; "do not say so, my dear," repeated she,

as if she were threatened with the loss of her only earthly protector. The Count took her hand affectionately, as though he would re-assure her, and continued,

“I thought that I was dead, but my soul was alive. I seemed to be before the judgment-seat of God, and I saw the tremendous judge in the midst of an immense concourse of the blessed ; but it was not paradise, it was a solemn, mysterious place which filled my soul with holy terror. Among all the saints I do not recollect that I recognized any except Saint Peter, with the keys, and Saint Thomas.”—The latter was the patron saint of the house of Alfredini. For several centuries some of the family had borne the name of Thomas.—“Saint Peter said that, for the present, the gates of paradise could not be opened for me, for I had not sufficient masses said in my life to cleanse my soul from venial sins, and that it must go to be purified in the fire of purgatory for many years. Near the throne of God was the holy Mother, who did not seem disposed to intercede for me and supplicate for the remission of my sentence. But Saint Filomena stood near her, seemingly as her favourite

attendant, and I thought she looked at me with interest and affection. Her face and appearance were like yours, my Amalia, and I thought that it was really yourself interceding for me. Saint Filomena approached the Mother of God, and said, 'O, most holy Virgin! Queen of heaven, intercede with thy Son, for this thy faithful servant. He erected altars to me, and established services, and to the disgust of many of the wicked, he was one of those who caused my memory to be revived among men, when it had been lost for many centuries, and was one of the warmest and most zealous of my devotees.' Then I thought that the Mother of God smiled on her complacently, and approached her divine Son, and warmly recommended my cause, though I could not hear what she said. I thought that the Eternal Judge said at last, 'Well, I cannot deny thee anything, my Mother. Let him return again to the living world,' and then I seemed no longer dead, but alive. 'Let him go and have masses said for himself while living, and for his soul when he shall be dead, and the gates of paradise shall be opened for him.' Those were the words I heard,

and then I awoke. This dream has disturbed me all day. What do you think of it, Don Giuseppe?"

Don Giuseppe immediately saw the advantage that he could take of the dream, but he was unwilling to commit himself by any indiscretion, and therefore replied,

"I scarcely know what to think. It does not seem to have the character of a vision."

"Why not?" asked the Count.

"Because you are not at all likely to die," said Don Giuseppe, though he did not think so.

"The life of men," replied the other, "is in the hand of God, and no one can answer for the morrow. I am not at all strong, and one daily sees even the most robust carried off in the very flower of life. Moreover, might not God himself have allowed this dream to come, in order that it might give testimony to that holy virgin, (since there are so many who oppose her worship, who indeed deride it), by showing how advanced she is in His favour, if her intercession can so prevail with the heavenly Mother."

## CHAPTER IV.

THE CUNNING MAN, THE JEALOUS, AND THE  
TIGER, ARE ALWAYS WIDE AWAKE.

OH! the Count is a famous logician! He had discovered the exact point. Don Giuseppe did not verbally express approbation, he felt ashamed to do so, but he manifested it by signs. He was truly edified by the subtlety of reasoning of the saint-like man! To the Countess the argument appeared rather tremendous, and altogether two-edged, cutting both ways. She looked at her weak-minded husband with charity and gentle indulgence, as a sage smiles with benevolent air on the simplicity of a child.

"At all events," continued the Count, "whether the dream be a true vision or not,



there is no harm in considering it as such, and profitting by it for my soul's good."

Don Giuseppe still kept silence, and allowed the Count to run on, and he thus continued :

" Could I not establish an annual number of Masses to be said during my life, and leave directions to have them continued after my death? I would then leave a small benefice to pay a chaplain in part, who could reside in the family with a double advantage."

The idea of establishing in his house a benefice for his domestic chaplain much pleased the Count, and still more so Don Giuseppe, but did not at all please the Countess. A hidden instinct, and her own experience, although she would not have confessed it,—still against her will, manifested to her the peril, rather than the advantage which a family might experience from an established chaplain. However, she merely remarked,

" The family may not always desire to have a chaplain. Perhaps it might be better for the spiritual interests both of the family and of the chaplain if he were to absent himself sometimes, or live out of the house altogether, and allow an

interval between the Masses to be said in the private chapel. So that I should make the condition that Mass should be said as often as possible in the Alfredini House Chapel, which should have its own chaplain; but that if obstacles arose, the family would be at liberty to have a chaplain or not, and the Masses might be said by other priests, or elsewhere."

The Count, who would never oppose his wife, answered,

"You are quite right, my dear, and so it shall be. What do you think of it, Don Giuseppe?"

Don Giuseppe very well knew that opposition would be dangerous for his authority, and might risk the unlimited faith that the Count now reposed in him. Besides, it appeared to him that to enjoy the benefice without the absolute obligation of residence would be preferable, and that if a chapel were established in the house, it would afford him the opportunity of living under the same roof with Amalia even if she became a widow, which would certainly be the case before long. He agreed with the Count that the benefice should be handsome. Two hundred

dollars were assigned to the chaplain for two hundred Masses a year, with some prayers, orations, and other devotions, to be performed in the house. If the Masses were said out of the house, or the chaplain did not reside in the family, there were two hundred dollars, and no more. For Italy, this provision was most generous, indeed almost prelatic. The priest endeavoured then artfully to delay matters, being commissioned by the Count to make the necessary arrangements, until the death of the Marchioness.

From an idle, stupid dream, the offspring of mere superstition, did Don Giuseppe succeed in securing a good income, and in colouring his residence under the Count's roof, so as to avoid scandal in case of the death of the Count.

If cabinets would avail themselves of priests, would not ministerial artifices—already so mystified—become vastly more mysterious?

## CHAPTER V.

## A MESSENGER ARRIVES IN HASTE.

MATTERS having been thus arranged, and the Countess having kissed her husband, she was just leaving the room, when the sound was heard of a horse galloping up to the house. A succession of furious and impatient knocks at the door followed. The heart of the Countess beat violently. A hasty step was heard ascending the stairs. Don Giuseppe opened the bed-room door, and saw a servant of the house, preceding one of the Fossombroni household, who, breathless, rushed forward and exclaimed, without noticing the Countess, who was also close to the door, "Oh, Don Giuseppe, pray come directly, the Marchioness is dying!"

"Hush!" said Don Giuseppe with a tone

betraying deep anxiety ; but it was too late : the tidings had reached the ear of the Countess. "Holy Virgin !" she cried, rushing from the room.

"What is the matter ?" asked the Count, in a state of perfect bewilderment.

Don Giuseppe went to him and said, "Pray for the Marchioness, she is dying. Take care of the Count," said he to the servant, and hastened away.

In a few minutes the horses were harnessed. Don Giuseppe and Amalia entered the carriage. He seated himself by the Countess, in the unavoidable confidence of offering her consolation ; and holding her hand in his, and leaning towards her, he spoke to her affectionately and passionately. He could address her then as her angel of consolation ! They quickly arrived, and Don Giuseppe, cursing the shortness of the distance, alighted, and precipitately ascended the stairs. The Countess followed him, and both were soon beside the death-bed.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE MIND AT THE MOMENT OF SEPARATION  
FROM THE BODY IS GIFTED WITH DIVINATION.

THE Marchioness had been for some days confined to her bed. She was now suddenly attacked with a fit. Her eyes were fixed, her body rigid and motionless, and, save that her breast heaved, she gave scarcely any signs of life. One of the women who attended upon her was with her at the time, for she was never left alone. The attendant rushed to her assistance, and rung the bell violently; but when others entered the room, the Marchioness seemed to be breathing her last. "Fetch the Parish Priest," exclaimed the frightened attendant, "the Marchioness is dying." A man was despatched for him in haste. "Run for the Countess Amalia

and Don Giuseppe, who is at her house." This order was obeyed, and a third messenger was ordered to summon a medical attendant. The first to arrive was the Priest of Rivalta. He came immediately, for he happened, most opportunely, to be walking alone near the house. He entered. The remedies administered in haste, recalled the dormant faculties of the patient, though only for a few minutes. The change seemed miraculous. In these last moments of her life, the light of reason shone more brilliantly than even in the energy of youth, and with a brilliancy not only seemingly incompatible with her age and present position, but superior even to the natural powers of her mind in the fulness of her strength and vigour.

Those who have attended the sick and dying must have been struck with this singular phenomenon, which, once or twice in their lives, or even oftener, they will have had occasion to remark. She perhaps did not see things now in a new light, but they were presented to her eyes in a more striking manner than they had ever been before.

She opened her eyes and noticed the priest.

He took her hand, and she asked for Amalia. "They are gone to fetch her," replied he ; "in the meantime, reflect upon your state, madam; and think about God."

"Yes, my time is at hand. I would confess once more. I have something to communicate which I feel deeply at this solemn moment, and which weighs upon my conscience, that will so soon be bared to God's eye."

"Your ladyship will confess, then?—I am ready to hear."

She composed her thoughts for a moment, and then, with a feeble voice which grew gradually fainter and fainter, she said—

"Don Giuseppe has conducted my family affairs for the last two years, and I have reposed unlimited confidence in him."

"No doubt he has counselled you for the best," said the priest, but rather interrogatively than as if persuaded of the truth of his observation.

"I always believed so," replied she, "but at this moment it seems to me that an internal voice tells me to the contrary." The priest was silent, though in his conscience, perhaps, he



assented. "Don Giuseppe contrived the marriage of Amalia with the Count in order to divert her from an affection which she had conceived for a young man that was not well suited to her. My mind is confused—I do not remember—oh, yes, for Francesco Fantoni. I let him do as he pleased, and now I feel that I was wrong, and Amalia is miserable, and it is my fault. I tremble, too, at another idea that can only be the suggestion of Satan himself. I feel a glimmering consciousness that Don Giuseppe acted towards Amalia as if he were jealous, and nourished a secret passion towards her himself. I am afraid it is wicked, even, to think such a thing. What do you think, Father?"

"You have no authority to think evil of him, for you have no proof that he had any wrong intention in bringing about this marriage. That he imposed the union upon her tyrannically may be true, but there is no help for it now."

The priest would not speak more plainly, though he saw exactly how it was. He already knew of the attachment of Francesco and Amalia; for the Countess Belfiore, hearing of the match that was to take place with the Count,

hastened to the Priest of Rivalta to tell him of the scene that had passed at her house between the two young people at Easter. But the priest was too prudent to interfere, and seeing no remedy, he advised the Countess to let the affair take its course. He, too, feared the want of religion on the part of Francesco, because he did not see him at church ; and though disposed to tolerance, yet, as a conscientious man, he did not feel justified in interfering. Now, while listening to the Marchioness, he regretted not having done so ; for he suspected the true state of the case, and the treacherous love of Don Giuseppe. Still he was unwilling now to aggravate the disquiet of the Marchioness, and merely remarked that if she had done wrong, she would now do no more to redeem it than to repent. After an admonition suited to prepare her for her long journey, he gave her absolution. She then summoned all her strength for a final effort, and said—

“Father, I beg you to open the box that stands upon the drawers. You will find the key in the little drawer of my work-table, between the windows.” He obeyed her direc-

tions. "Take out the paper, if you please, which is at the bottom of the box, and give it to me."

He gave it to her. She took the paper in both hands, and with the last remaining strength of her trembling fingers, tore it in halves, saying, "Here, I had provided for Don Giuseppe, but I shall leave him nothing now."

The priest offered some opposition, and begged her to leave him at least a slight remuneration, as she only suspected him, and consequently it was not just to deprive him of all. He would have added other arguments suggested by prudence and his sense of rectitude, but it was too late. The prostration of the Marchioness returned; she was again insensible, and seemed to be going off. Whether just or unjust, therefore, the priest had no means of remedying her hasty act, nor did he in reality feel greatly disposed to regret it.

The effort she had made no doubt accelerated her death. As if she had accomplished an important duty and nothing more was required of her, every appearance of vitality forsook her, and she lay motionless. Her face suddenly

resumed its death-like pallor, and her features rapidly changed. The death-struggles commenced, and the priest proceeded to perform extreme unction, for she was too far gone to receive the communion, though a slight expression of intelligence still remained, as if she knew what was passing around her. The priest pronounced the mystic words, anointing the lips, eyes, nostrils, hands, and feet of the patient, that every part of the human body defiled by sin might be purified. Having washed his hands and given orders that the water and everything else which had come in contact with the oil should be thrown on the fire, he returned to the bed to pray for her soul.

## CHAPTER VII.

AN EVIL SPIRIT DISTURBS THE REPOSE OF A  
DEPARTING SOUL.

ALL had taken place from the arrival of the priest to the administration of the extreme unction within the space of half an hour, and in little more Don Giuseppe and Amalia arrived. Both entered with an appearance of intense anguish depicted on their countenances,—in Amalia's case real, in Don Giuseppe's assumed. They approached the bed. With indescribable grief and tenderness Amalia looked on the altered countenance of her beloved relative, and bathed it with her tears. Don Giuseppe cast a look of aversion on the Parish priest, whom he considered an intruder, and standing close to Amalia,

seemed determined to regain his proper position.

The Priest of Rivalta looked at Amalia with sympathy, at Don Giuseppe with indifference, and continued the prayers for the dying. During a short pause, the weeping Countess, with a voice of deep sadness and affection, exclaimed—

“Grandmamma ! my dearest grandmamma ! do you hear me ? do you know me ?—Your Amalia is with you ! She it is who presses your hand—listen to her voice. Give her a sign that you hear her. Dear, dearest grandmamma, do you know me ?” The Marchioness answered by a slight movement of her head, and faint pressure of her granddaughter’s hand.

These reciprocations of tenderness and mutual adieux, were interrupted by the unctuous and insinuating accents of Don Giuseppe, which, though soft and tender, fell discordant on the ears of those present.

“My dear lady,” said he, “exert yourself, and commit your soul to God in your last moments.”

He was proceeding, but was arrested by ob-

serving a slight though unmistakable expression of disgust on the rigid muscles of the face of the Marchioness. It was still more observable as he took the hand Amalia held in her own. Their three hands were intertwined. Don Domenico felt a sensation of anger, and extended his arm by an involuntary movement to withdraw the priest from the two ladies, under the pretext of reading the prayers. Amalia also at the same moment withdrew her hand, so artfully held by the priest, and the Marchioness—the dying woman in her agony—on the verge of dissolution and apparently insensible—herself felt the hateful touch, and she, too, withdrew her hand. This was, indeed, a terrible moment for Don Giuseppe. The Priest of Rivalta, the dying woman, the confiding, weeping Countess, all withdrew instinctively from the man who was apparently the consoler in that trying scene, the diffuser of blessings on the place. At that moment he felt the horror of his position—he was reaping the reward of his guilt. He shuddered at himself, but his heart treasured up fresh stores of hatred and perversity. From that moment he hated Don

Domenico. All this passed through his mind in a single second. His countenance gave no sign of emotion nor displeasure, nor did its severity of expression increase. Not a muscle was contracted—his face retained the expression of benevolence it had previously assumed, and on the Marchioness withdrawing her hand, he merely said, in a pitying voice, “She is delirious, poor thing!” but the dying woman herself, with a sign of her head and movement of her lips, answered in the negative.

Don Domenico was determined the scene should not be prolonged, and had the conscientious temerity to press between Amalia and Don Giuseppe, thus separating him, as if unintentionally, from her side, and continued the prayers. At the sound of his voice the face of the Marchioness expressed satisfaction, and a few moments after she departed.

Amalia was overcome with grief. Don Domenico was possessed by a deep sentiment of holy awe at the contact with death, but at the same time he had a feeling of satisfaction in having performed his duty. Don Giuseppe underwent a sensation of hate against the dead



body lying before him, and he almost regretted that he had no means of revenging himself for the affront just received, which had humiliated him, if not in the eyes of others—that he did not know—at least in his own. It was a solemn picture, worthy of the most expert artist, that was presented in the chamber of the Marchioness, who had just drawn her last breath.

Amalia yielded to her emotions of grief, though not with cries or desperate struggles. The tears coursed each other down her pale cheeks, and she repeatedly kissed the rigid face of her departed relative. Don Giuseppe retained his appearance of self-confidence, notwithstanding his humiliation. He endeavoured to persuade the Countess to leave the room, and allow him to conduct her to another apartment. She looked at the priest of Rivalta, as if asking protection and consolation in her grief from him, and convulsively clasping his arm, suffered him to lead her softly away.

## CHAPTER VIII.

CONTAINS A HISTORY EMBRACING VOLUMES.

DON GIUSEPPE was left alone in the room of death. His eye turned angrily towards the door by which the Countess and the priest had departed. He felt incensed against both. All this while he thinks the detestable priest is enjoying her company, receiving her unrestrained confidence, and drying her precious tears, robbing him of his right! She prefers the stranger to comfort her before him. Instead of enjoying the luxury of being thus at her side as her comforter—an opportunity which may never occur again—he is left to keep company with the dead.

To the dead he turned, and smiled with scorn and bitter irony. Her last act had been to affront him—an affront that would doubtless alienate from him yet more the heart of her he

loved so well. He had no method of revenging now the evident disgust of the dying woman. The aged face was rigid. Death had obliterated every sign of vitality. That breast felt no longer grief nor joy. He gloated over the idea of the satisfaction he should have derived, if, through his means, she had descended to the tomb a prey to grief: and suffering, indeed, he would have inflicted upon her even in the apathy and obtuseness of age; for the heart of man, born to sorrow, is ever open to grief. But now it was too late to court the wicked thought, for she was out of his reach. He imagined that suspicion had been aroused in her mind, and by the priest too. But she was dead, and all fear of her revoking the legacy, which he knew she had left him, was removed.

Here for an instant the thought of love, hate, and vengeance, all gave way to cupidity. The beautiful estate of Terranuova was his. Her change of feeling towards him came too late to alter the disposition of her property—and at this thought he looked on the corpse with a malicious air of triumph. She neither felt nor saw—but he looked at her with mockery, as if saying, “Your anger is impotent. I defy all the powers of

nature to rescue you from the hands of death. In spite of you, the estate is mine."

An exulting thought crossed his mind. At all events he could not complain of fortune. How much had he accomplished in a short space of time! He had commanded as master in a house of noble standing. He had revenged himself upon his enemies, and embittered the life of his rival by for ever depriving him of Amalia. Her he had placed in a house in which he would soon reign supreme, and she, who would not accept him as her lover, would be obliged to acknowledge him as her master. He was already secure of a good benefice in the Count's house—in the same house as Amalia—without the necessity of maintaining an establishment of his own; and, to crown all, the possession of so rich an inheritance was entirely the result of his own cleverness and prudence. Who so fortunate as he? And yet what was it all, without the heart of Amalia? Oh, his arts must succeed. He has controlled fate itself; he has turned events to his benefit; and shall he not subdue the arrogance of a simple, inexperienced, superstitious woman?

Again his thoughts revert to the bequest, and he looks again on the frigid features of the Marchioness, with a repressed laugh of mockery. "The estate is mine ; the dead do not revive. You cannot," apostrophising the Marchioness, "return to wrest the prey from my hands. You will not rise from your grave, however hard your couch may be, and however your bones may shiver at it. I shall hear lamentations rising out of the grave, from the departed spirit, as I traverse my own domain. But the fields are mine :—Death stands between us, and none other can tear them from me."

## CHAPTER IX.

FIRST ATTEMPT OF SISYPHUS TO ASCEND  
THE MOUNTAIN.

AT the height of his triumph Don Giuseppe looks again towards the lifeless body. He sees a paper upon the bed close to her hand. He takes it, looks at it, sees that it is torn, but that it contains a few words in the Marchioness's writing, of which however he cannot gather the meaning. His heart trembles, he recollects the demonstration of aversion made by the dying woman—and he knows that she had written the memorandum in his favour many years after having made her will, which was already in the hands of others. When he entered the house, the Codicil, which as an addition to the will was legal, she had herself kept in some secret receptacle.

He seeks around, raises the coverlid, and finds another fragment—he seizes it wildly and reads it. He does not yet clearly discern the sense of it—but the estate of Terranuova is mentioned. Suspicion begins to assume the formidable aspect of certainty. Who can express the anguish of his heart at that moment? The rage of avarice now burns in his breast with the same fury that love had done before; another foe had entered his heart to torment him in a different manner. With uncontrollable frenzy he tears the covering from the corpse to search for other papers—he turns over the body, never heeding the probability of anyone entering the room and witnessing the profane indecency. He finds another scrap of paper. In fearful anxiety, his eye runs over it, but he is too bewildered to make it out at first. By a violent effort he succeeds in reading it, and learns his doom;—he has lost all!—An ill-repressed howl escapes him. He looks again on the face of the corpse, over which he had replaced the covering. He utters an imprecation—but death seems to deride him. A horrible temptation assails him. He clenches his hand in furious rage to deal a

blow upon that rigid face—but the dead body offered no resistance—and he allowed his arm to fall heavily down by his side. An insane idea seizes him. He will become a robber. Don Giuseppe, that proud and lofty soul, a robber! He resolves, before the legal functionaries arrive to affix their seals, to rifle boxes and drawers, and lay hands on the concealed treasure. He knows the Marchioness kept large sums of gold by her, and he will possess himself of the rich booty, and laugh to scorn the living and the dead.

A gleam of desperate satisfaction crossed his mind at the idea. He moved a step with the intention of consummating the crime which would enrol him in the ranks of the vilest felons—him, whose crimes till then had been those of a man of superior intelligence, crimes appertaining to the lofty sphere of privileged beings—of diplomats, of criminals of high degree—of priests, whose crimes are in exquisite and unexceptionable taste!—he is now on the point of degrading himself, of descending from the lofty rank of the elect in crime, to the grade of the lowest malefactor, of the thief!

But he may be disturbed, taken in the act,



and accused of theft! The servants would certainly not spare him if they discovered him. No; they would rejoice rather. Servants always dislike intruders—and they looked upon him as an interloper. At any moment persons might enter the room, and to a certainty they would do so before long. To be accused, tried, and imprisoned as a thief! Impossible! and the idea vanished. It was well for him that it did! He had scarcely put the fragments of paper in his pocket, when the servants and others entered to weep over the remains of the good Marchioness, and recite the *de profundis* for the repose of her soul.

Don Giuseppe accomplishes his usual miracles. Yes, it is truly miraculous that he can so quickly assume the appearance of composure, and an expression of pity and grief. He looks on the rigid features before him with the utmost seeming benignity, as if his eye can never be satisfied with the sight of her whom he has so faithfully served. He now devotionally recites the prayers for the dead. To the ear they sound like invocations—but in his heart they are changed to imprecations.

All this, from the moment the Countess left the room, was the work of five minutes ! What a history of human passions, and what changes in the inner man may be produced in a few minutes ! It was a history of volumes !

Don Giuseppe, with a composed countenance, soft manner, and gentle utterance, gave the necessary directions for the funeral. The whole management devolved upon him, as the natural consequence of his position in the house. Thus, the sole inheritance falling to him from the Fossombroni estate was the trouble of interring the Marchioness ! What ingratitude ! will be the general exclamation in the neighbourhood.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE CODICIL DESTROYED, THE WILL REMAINS.

THE Marchioness had written the codicil in Don Giuseppe's favour, feeling that he had a claim upon her gratitude for the interest which he took in the welfare of her grand-daughter. At first she had not intended leaving him more than a slight remembrance; the service he had rendered her having been but short, and confined to the strictest limits of duty, altogether independent of affection. Elderly ladies in the Roman Catholic world desire that their priests should dedicate themselves to the mentirely—and the priests who thus humour them may securely reckon upon a handsome remuneration, either during the life, or at the death of the venerable devotees.

In her will, the Marchioness had bequeathed sums to be paid for various devotional purposes. At the parish church a Novena was to be established to some saint, but to which is of little moment, as we cannot pretend to precision with regard to all the capricious names and rites of catholicism. The Novena would greatly increase the annual income of the priest; and, besides, he would derive great benefit from a number of costly Masses which were to be said. She had ordered that the funeral expenses should amount to four thousand francs, the greater part to be spent in services for the good of her soul. She had likewise bequeathed a large sum to be distributed among the poor. From funeral calculations the poor are seldom excluded. In all things human, good and evil are combined.

Don Giuseppe thus found that the parish priest, who expected nothing, would derive great advantage from the death of the Marchioness; and that he, whose expectations had been so lofty, would gain nothing whatever. His wrath and rage knew no bounds. He began to fear that he must unwittingly have exposed the secrets of his heart. The affair seemed most

mysterious. Could the priest of Rivalta know anything? Could he by any means have guessed at his secret? could he even suspect the state of his feelings? Had he even exposed himself? No. But did his conduct leave room for unfavourable deductions? Here was his greatest fear.

The Countess Belfiore was the friend of Francesco and of the priest, and though she had not seen Amalia, she had doubtless heard so much from Francesco as to enable her to form a just judgment upon Don Giuseppe, and condemn his conduct accordingly. In all probability she had communicated her suspicions to Don Domenico; who would feel a presumption, amounting almost to certainty, of Don Giuseppe's guilty love for Amalia. His natural conclusion then was that the priest had indisposed the Marchioness towards him, and she had, at confession, given him orders to tear up the instrument executed in favour of the chaplain. But if so, she must have recovered the use of her faculties when she seemed at the last extremity. Might not Don Domenico have destroyed the paper without receiving orders from the Marchioness? Bu

no : how could he obtain possession of it? He would not dare to commit such an act. He had both too much honesty and good sense, even Don Giuseppe was constrained to confess. But in any case it seemed that his love was discovered, and he feared that it would become publicly known by the priest's means. He therefore determined to seek Don Domenico, and learn from him, as far as possible, the true state of the case, resolving to treat him with more or less consideration according to the power he appeared to possess of injuring him.

## CHAPTER XI.

AGITATIONS OF A PURE CONSCIENCE AND ITS  
CONSOLATION.

ON his part, the good Priest of Rivalta was far from feeling tranquil. He now feared that he had not been sufficiently far-sighted and prudent. He was almost certain that he was in possession of a terrible secret. It seemed impossible to doubt the sacrilegious love of Don Giuseppe, and his infamous arts to make an innocent girl his victim. At present, it is true, she was the victim sacrificed, but not dishonoured—but who could tell the point which the wickedness of the man might reach, and whether the Countess would always be able to avoid the snares laid for her with such satanic subtlety? His own ability was inadequate to the providing of a remedy. He

was not at liberty to act with Amalia, and put her on her guard as to the perverse intentions of Don Giuseppe. All that he knew was not, it is true, the result of the Marchioness's confession, but his suspicions had been confirmed by that means, and therefore it was that he could not interfere. Even the information which he had previously obtained, was so connected with what the Marchioness had herself told him, that he could make no use of it, without violating the secrecy of the confessional. He now deeply regretted that he had neglected to ask her permission to remedy the evil as far as might be in his power. No doubt it would have been freely accorded, and with gratitude on the part of the dying woman, and armed with such permission, he could have acted if not openly, at least efficaciously. Thus by his inadvertence the poor Countess was left exposed to danger, and his self-upbraidings were intense. Again he reproached himself for not having secured the fragments of the paper which the Marchioness had torn up. In the confusion of the moment, and with the simplicity and guilelessness of an innocent man, he had not thought about it.



The matter standing thus, mischief might come of it, and he might be placed in disagreeable contact with Don Giuseppe; in so much that he felt no little embarrassment as to the means of extricating himself without incurring the danger of violating the secret of the confessional. He endeavoured however to calm his self-reproaches by the reflection that, in reality, his conscience was free from blame.

## CHAPTER XII.

HOW DIVERSE ARE THE OPINIONS OF THE  
WORLD !

ON the following day the funeral took place, and the will was read. Numerous were the comments on its non-mention of the Chaplain. The gossips for the most part thought it very mysterious. The zealots for the church—the clergy, the old aristocrats and the bigots, saw in it on the part of the Marchioness, the forgetfulness of imbecility, and on the part of Don Giuseppe, noble indifference to his pecuniary interests—a case altogether rare among priests ! Don Giuseppe himself encouraged the latter idea, although his heart was torn with rage and grief. He maintained an appearance of composure, exerted himself with alacrity in making

the requisite arrangements, and was ever ready, apparently with unaffected zeal, to laud the virtues of the good Marchioness. In the midst of the anger that consumed him, he consoled himself by thinking that Amalia and the Count would appreciate his conduct, and that he should profit by it eventually, not only as it regarded his love, but his material interests also.

Still he wished to arrive at a complete understanding of the state of the case, in order that he might shape his conduct accordingly. His conference therefore with the priest was not to be escaped; and he exerted all his courage, and the utmost strength of his will to bring himself to undertake the formidable visit. He deliberated on the best mode of proceeding, took with him the unfortunate torn document, and went to the good man's house.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE HEART OF THE BOLD MAN TREMBLES,  
THAT OF THE MODEST RESTS SECURE.

ON the announcement of Don Giuseppe, Don Domenico could not repress a sense of uneasiness and trepidation, but he felt no fear. His was the natural modesty of Virtue which feels agitated on first confronting Vice. Vice is, on the contrary, bold in its first meeting with Virtue, and has the advantage ; but in continued contact, Virtue acquires self-confidence, and Vice can with difficulty hide its discomfiture.

The priest rose to receive Don Giuseppe with quiet courtesy, and motioned him to take a seat. They had never been on terms of intimacy, and Don Giuseppe assumed an air of distant, though not disrespectful reserve. They looked at each

other for a moment without speaking. The mute scrutiny was natural, for each desired to read the heart of the other ; but neither could discern anything.

“ I have come,” commenced Don Giuseppe, “ to arrange with you about the funeral, and to have some conversation on other subjects.”

“ I am at your service,” answered the priest, coldly.

They soon settled the funeral affairs, for the priest was not avaricious and rapacious, as too many of his class are on such occasions, and Don Giuseppe was impatient to enter upon the subject which interested him personally. He therefore did so.

“ The poor Marchioness died so suddenly that it was most fortunate you happened to be at hand to administer the sacraments.”

“ I am very glad, too, that it so happened, as your absence prevented you from performing the office.”

Don Giuseppe, as was his wont in any perplexity, slightly bit his lip.

“ I was truly astonished,” said he, “ that she should manifest any sign of aversion towards me

in her last moments. She had always before shown to me much deference and affection."

The priest had not any answer to make, and therefore remained silent.

"It is a comfort to me, however, to think that she had lost the use of her reason."

"I do not think that she had," replied Don Domenico.

"How! You do not? Allow me to ask you why," said Don Giuseppe, showing himself at that moment but a poor diplomatist.

"I think she had the use of her senses, because she knew the persons around her. She certainly recognised the Countess."

"You mean to say, then, that you believe the Marchioness intended to express dislike towards me," said Don Giuseppe, imprudently, his feelings for the moment blinding his judgment.

"I do not say so," replied the other, quietly, but firmly. "I do not say so, Don Giuseppe. I only say that she gave no indication at that moment of loss of reason."

"You certainly are the best judge as to whether she was sensible or not, as you con-

fessed her," said Don Giuseppe, restraining himself as much as possible.

"Yes, I confessed her," answered Don Domenico, his breast heaving with virtuous indignation : but his mouth was closed by the secret confession.

"If she confessed, then, she must have been perfectly sensible."

"Don Giuseppe," answered the priest, with severe dignity, "you have no right to attempt any investigation respecting the confession. As you are well aware, not even the Pope himself is at liberty to do so."

"But I have the right," thundered he, with an expression which seemed to the priest truly satanic ; and exhibiting the torn paper, "I have the right to demand the reason for the destruction of this instrument," laying down the pieces before Don Domenico.

"Neither you nor anyone else has the right to question me, but there are courts of justice to which you can summon me if you choose."

Don Giuseppe saw the error into which he had fallen, and endeavoured to compose himself.

"I would beg of you," he said calmly, "to

have the courtesy to tell me what you know, and are at liberty to divulge, respecting this unfortunate affair. Of course, I do not suspect yourself ; it could be no advantage to you to destroy the paper ; but I do desire to unravel the mystery."

The priest felt disinclined to make him any reply, being desirous of showing himself equally indifferent to his threats and his assumed courtesy. He hoped, however, that by telling him as much as he was at liberty to say, he might have the opportunity of touching the heart of the perverted man—so little did he know his character !—or, at least, of putting him upon his guard against proceeding too far in his designs upon Amalia. His lips were sealed, it is true, but his eye was not closed, and he could watch over the innocent lamb, and intimidate the wolf, although he was unable to make any show of defending her. Acting upon these reflections, he answered—

"The Marchioness, after her confession, ordered me to take the paper out of a box, and give it to her. She seized it eagerly, and tore it to pieces, without telling me the nature of its



contents. I had neither the opportunity nor the right to prevent her. It was the last act of a dying person, and her wishes at that moment ought to be respected. The dying are seldom tempted to perform acts of injustice or perfidy, when they feel themselves on the point of rendering an account to God."

"But you ought to have prevented her," exclaimed Don Giuseppe, violently. He had in part satisfied himself, for he had discovered that the lips of the priest were close sealed, even if he knew anything to his disadvantage.

"You ought to have prevented a person out of her senses from committing an act so prejudicial to the fame and interest of another. You failed in your duty, and proved that you were excited by malice and ill-will. It is clear that you hate me."

"I am not obliged to confess whether I love or hate you, Don Giuseppe," answered the priest, quietly. "God is my judge if I sin against Christian charity. At this moment, when I am insulted in my own house by a fellow-priest, I feel that I can securely await His judgment; only allow me to remark, that no person out of

her senses would have ordered me to do, or would herself have done, what the Marchioness did. That is sufficient, sir, I shall not say another word—I have ended. If you are not satisfied, apply to a legal tribunal. Take your torn paper, containing your accusation.” He did not utter the words maliciously : but Don Giuseppe felt most forcibly that the paper was, indeed, a solemn accusation, a patent of iniquity. “Produce it in a court of justice, the Priest of Rivalta will boldly confront the Chaplain of the house of Fossombroni.”

With his energetic and manly answer Don Domenico subdued the spirit of the proud Chaplain ; but the more the latter felt himself debased, the more haughty and daring was the expression his countenance assumed. He rose to his feet and looked at the priest with an air of defiance ; the latter, also standing, regarded him with an expression of magnanimity quite unminged with hate. Taking his tri-cornered hat, Don Giuseppe went his way, his heart bursting with rage, and vowing vengeance against the priest, his feelings more than ever embittered by the sense of his complete discomfiture. He had no

choice but to bury the affair in silence, since its resuscitation could only tend to his dishonour, and disturb both his plans of vengeance and projects of love. His greatest comfort consisted in the reflection that secrecy was enjoined upon the priest by the obligations of confession.

## CHAPTER XIV.

PRIDE AND POVERTY ARE TWO GUESTS WHO  
INTRODUCE MISERY WITHIN THE WALLS OF  
A HOUSE.

A FAMILY picture. The dinner hour. Seated at a table are the father of the family, aged about sixty, his wife near upon fifty, and his four sons, whose ages range from fifteen to twenty-one. The articles composing the furniture of the dining-room are very limited in number, but set forth in such manner as to make the most of those which are at all showy; as if the owners were ashamed of their mediocrity, and wished to make them pass for better than they were. Some pieces of the furniture, show traces of past opulence and signs of proud poverty. None of

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the table appointments are of silver except the spoons. They bear a heraldic device, the arms of the family, who, though not noble, belong to a very ancient race of citizens. The dinner-service presents a strange medley of china, which, if no longer new, has not yet become old enough to obtain value in the eye of the antiquary, with the cheapest and most vulgar modern kitchen ware. Wine, although so cheap in Italy, is absent, with the exception of a small decanter for the master of the house. The bread is not of fine wheat, but rather brown, though wholesome. The soup comes on. It contains rice in abundance, but is very poor, much diluted with water, though rendered palatable by herbs and vegetables. Meat follows, and is distributed in very limited quantities, a small share to each, but a considerable portion is previously subtracted for the patriarch of the family. A little cheese concludes the daily repast of the Lanzini family, sufficient to appease the most urgent calls of hunger, but barely enough to satisfy an exacting appetite.

The family can live in tolerable comfort so long as strict economy is maintained, and they

are contented with a little. But hereditary pride mars their happiness, and haughtiness renders this fallen family miserable. The father cannot forget his past competence and comparative splendour. In his youth that house overflowed with abundance; but he dissipated his wealth in play, extravagance, and licentious pleasures. He was extremely hospitable, and at the age of twenty-five found himself compelled to adopt a radical reform of life, to avoid being reduced to mendicity. He married a virtuous and simple-hearted young woman of honest family. She brought him a moderate fortune, which assisted in improving his affairs, but did not suffice to restore him to his former condition of comfort. The family no longer lived in affluence, though shielded from want. The seasons were unpropitious, the taxes of an oppressive government were increased, and stricter economy became necessary. Thus passed thirty years, until the day when father, mother, and sons are introduced to the reader.

The four sons all look spirited young men. Their countenances are striking and intelligent, but lack the refinement imparted by a careful

education. The mother presents an appearance of patient and affectionate gentleness ; and it is easy to judge, from her caressing and timid manner towards her husband, that she is in the habit of endeavouring to soften the effects of his violent and hasty temper. Age had not yet daunted his energies. His character would have shone magnanimous in the midst of plenty, but his heart is embittered and hardened by the straitness of his means. His face is still handsome, though his rigid features and pitiless eye bear witness to the struggle with which that proud soul accepts a life of sacrifice and humiliations. He is generous and imperious, and generally taciturn. His children manifest considerable respect for him, though but little love. All their affection is given to the mother. He regards his sons with an indefinable feeling of disgust and ill-humour, not nourished towards them personally, however, so much as against their ill fortune. Could he have consulted his own inclinations, he would have brought them up to the medical and legal professions : but one of them is master of a poor village school, bringing him in six hundred

francs a year, and another is a lawyer's clerk on miserable pay, perhaps a franc and a half *per diem*. These are the two elder ones, to whom he was unable to give a good education. The two youngest study at the seminary, and their father hopes to make something better of them; the youngest, for instance, a priest, the other a lawyer. The priest will cost little or nothing; the lawyer will incur some expense for his university studies, which will begin next year: but the amount is moderate, very few of the students being provided by their families with more than nine hundred francs a year; and this sum will be paid by his eldest brother, a rising ecclesiastic. For the reader has now been introduced to the parents and brothers of Don Giuseppe.

A cloud passes over the brow of the father, indicating that melancholy thoughts trouble him. His heart is grieved, and he feels a deep sensation of anger and harrowing suspicion. The Marchioness had been dead three days. He was aware of the intended bequest to his son, for Don Giuseppe had spoken to him of it as a matter of certainty. Now it seems most



mysterious to him that the legacy is not forthcoming, and that his son should be completely neglected by the Marchioness. He cannot think it could arise from forgetfulness, and fears there is some definite cause for it. His mind is filled with anxiety, for a rumour has reached his ear about his son's conduct towards Amalia. Could he really have forgotten the respect due to her? He chased the suspicion as an injustice to his son, whom he believed to be inspired by sentiments of honour like himself, and quite incapable of forgetting his own dignity and his sacred character. No, it seems to him impossible that Don Giuseppe can have exposed himself to the scandal of the world. With such reasonings he tries to tranquillize his mind, but still he is sorely annoyed by the disappointment of the legacy. From this cause he is more than usually taciturn at table. His wife is more attentive than ever. His sons maintain a respectful silence; for although two of them are upwards of twenty, still they fear their father, who always strictly maintains his authority in his family. Suddenly his brow clears,

and he exclaims, as if a new thought has presented itself to him—

“Don Giuseppe ought now to come and live at home. Here have been three years of his life miserably wasted. We have had scarcely any assistance from him. If he came to live with us, his income would benefit the family, and we could all live more comfortably. Besides, he could occupy himself more exclusively with his studies and projects of advancement at home, than he could in the house of the Marchioness.”

His wife smiled and exclaimed, “Oh, that would be delightful!” but her smile quickly vanished. Her mother’s heart warned her that Don Giuseppe would never return to live at home.

It must be confessed that up to this time Don Giuseppe had not neglected his family. He had always been in the habit of rendering them some assistance; and if he had never manifested warm attachment to his father, he had always treated him with respect. Towards his mother he nourished feelings of filial affection, and to her he was really attached. She was so

good, and showed so much maternal tenderness towards him, that it was impossible he could cease to love her. For his brothers he felt neither affection nor dislike ; but, for the honour of the family, he had intended that one of them should enter the university at his expense, so that hitherto his family had really no cause to complain.

The dinner was over, and the party had separated. The father had retired to his own room, the mother to hers, to pursue her work. She was most assiduous, and, for the sake of economy, did almost everything herself, scarcely procuring any assistance. The sons had left the house.

## CHAPTER XV.

## A DRAMA FROM LIFE'S SCENES.

THE father had been alone some minutes, when Don Giuseppe entered his room. His air was tranquil, though his countenance showed traces of the struggle he had recently undergone, and which he in vain endeavoured to obliterate. On entering the room, he bowed and said—

“How do you do, father?”

“Very well, my son,” answered the father; “but I cannot rest about this neglect of the Marchioness.”

Don Giuseppe quietly answered, “I suppose she forgot. What can I do?”

“But did you not tell me some time ago, that you expected a good legacy at her death?”

"I did expect it, for she gave me reason to do so. But she was so old; she no doubt forgot."

"That may be true," answered the father, significantly; "but it would be a great relief to me to know that she had no other reason for her conduct."

"What reason do you imagine she can have had? Did I not always serve her faithfully and attentively?"

Notwithstanding his ostentation of tranquillity, Don Giuseppe's heart trembled.

"Well, let us drop this unpleasant subject," said the father. "The past is gone, and cannot be recalled. We must now think of the future, and see what is to be done for the best."

"I have already determined what I shall do," answered the son with tolerable firmness.

"Something, I hope, that will be for your own good, and that of the family too," answered his father.

"Certainly, it will be for the benefit of both, if I procure a good and lucrative situation."

"I suppose that you have something definite

in view, and that now you will come home to reside."

"I should be very glad to do so," answered the priest, prudently, "but that is not my plan of benefiting myself and family."

"What is your plan, then?" asked his father, who, feeling disappointed, began to exhibit signs of impatience.

"I do not intend to abandon my present position, and renounce my claims upon the gratitude of the Fossombroni family."

"What do you mean?" asked his father, with visible agitation, and with difficulty repressing the anger which began to swell his breast. "What have you gained by that employment? what recompense? what gratitude? Forgotten more completely than the lowest servant, and a mark set upon your brow! For the evil tongue of scandal will say that the forgetfulness of the Marchioness was intentional."

"I fear not the tongue of scandal. I am quite indifferent to it," remarked Don Giuseppe.

"Do you really mean to return to the house, where you have been so ignominiously treated, and where you have already lost three years of

your life—perhaps the years best calculated for advancing your personal interests? Return to the house where you have received no adequate recompense ! But, how could it be ? The Fossombroni family is now broken up, dispersed, and the house will be closed.”

“ Very true. I cannot remain in the house of the Fossombroni family, but there is no reason why I should refuse to serve their connexions. They may be able to recompense me, and remedy the forgetfulness of the Marchioness ; and in that case, I shall be able to assist my family.”

Don Giuseppe hoped to close his father’s mouth with promises of assistance, and he was most desirous of shortening the discussion. But his father had set his heart upon having him at home, and continued—

“ Where are you going ? Which of the relatives of the Marchioness can recompense you for your lost time ? And, if any one could, would you live and die a miserable domestic chaplain, when you might aspire to so high a position and fortune ? ”

“ I will attend to my own interests. I can

insure my advancement by the opportunities that will be afforded me in my new service with the Fossombroni family." He knew no better way of placing the subject before his father.

"That is to say—"

"Yes," interrupted Don Giuseppe. "I purpose to be chaplain to Count Alfredini, with a salary of two hundred thalers a-year. This is a lucrative appointment, and the duties annexed to it are very slight; only the saying of two hundred masses, which can be said elsewhere, and will therefore not prevent me from going out occasionally to preach."

The prospect was certainly most advantageous, but money itself was, in this instance, a secondary consideration with the father. To him, the character and good fame of his son were dearer than any mere pecuniary advantage. He saw, at a glance, that Don Giuseppe's reputation would be perilled, and that the character of an innocent woman would suffer in consequence; the rather that there were already unfavourable reports in circulation.

"I shall never give my consent to that," said the father, resolutely.



"And why not?" answered the son, no less resolutely.

"Because I have the good name of my son more at heart than any material advantage whatever."

"What do you mean to imply?" asked Don Giuseppe, raising his voice, rendered courageous by his age, and emboldened by crime.

"Yes," repeated the father violently, "the good name of my son and the family is more to me than a kingdom; and I would willingly sacrifice the one to the other."

"Your son has never yet dishonoured the name of Lanzini," answered the chaplain, firmly, with an assumption of imposing dignity; but it was the dignity of the theatre, for he played a false part.

"No," answered the unhappy father, with suppressed emotion, and in almost a supplicating tone. "No, the name of Lanzini has not yet been dishonoured, and I do hope that the most cultivated mind that has sprung from the family for many generations will take care not to dishonour it now. But we must avoid appearances which may tarnish it in the false judgment of

the world. Let me tell you, my son, appearances are now much against you, and will be still more if you enter Count Alfredini's house."

"Wherefore?" said Don Giuseppe, whose conscience was stung by remorse, and who consequently felt disposed to rebel against his father, in order to stifle its upbraidings.

"Because in that house resides a Fossombroni; a beautiful woman—a charming woman—a holy woman: and the world begins to insinuate that the chaplain would deceive her, and lead her to dishonour and perdition; and the name of the chaplain is Don Giuseppe Lanzini."

"Well," said the son, turning pale under his internal struggle with anger and grief, mortification and shame. "Well, let the world talk at its pleasure. I care not for the world. I act for the best, and defy scandal."

His father rose, took his hand, fixed his eye steadily upon his son's, and said—

"Do you act for the best, really? I beg of you, my son, to tell me all plainly. The affair of the Marchioness's will is most mysterious, and makes me exceedingly anxious. Do you act for the best?"

"I act for the best as a priest," answered Don Giuseppe, sarcastically. The thought was bitterness and gall to him then, that he was a priest through his father's tyranny. His father saw the bitterness of his smile, and shuddered—but he was unwilling to incense the pertinacious son without another effort to bring him to reason.

"Well," said he, "whether you are guilty in intention or innocent, it is time to put a stop to the scandal. Will you not come home to your family, and lead a quiet life; make those about you happy, hush every suspicion, and gratify your father."

"No, I shall not come home," said the priest, resolutely.

"You do not desire to render your poor mother happy, and your father?"

"No, I do not desire to render him happy who has made me miserable," cried the priest, turning pale, and trembling with grief and rage. "No, I will no longer obey that cruel father who sold me to serve his own purposes of ambition and interest," cried he, his eyes glancing with fury.

The incensed father seized a cane which stood

close by in a corner, and raised it menacingly above the head of his son, who, with arms crossed, and steady eye, looked fixedly at him. Don Giuseppe's glance seemed to express the bitterness of anger and hate, and he sullenly awaited the blow which would authorize and sanction his rebellion.

At that moment, his mother opened the door by chance, entering the room. She knew nothing of what was passing, but, seeing the terrible attitude of her husband and the no less terrible attitude of her son, so expressive of cold defiance—horror and mortal anguish seized her, and she threw herself at the feet of her husband, embracing them, and crying, "Mercy! mercy!" The father's arm fell powerless, his respiration was rendered quick and difficult from the effect of anger, and, in a broken voice, he exclaimed—

"Woman, this man, your son, dares to rebel against me."

"He is your son still," cried the unhappy mother.

"I disown him. He is a monster!"

"You made him a monster," answered coldly, but solemnly, the son, who was in truth a mon-

ster. "You made him a monster, when you obliged him to become an infamous Levite against his inclinations and will. Know, then, sir," continued he, blinded by rage and passion, and heedless of his mother's presence, "know, then, that I do love with a desperate and inextinguishable affection; that on account of that love I have lost a large inheritance; that for that love, and in order to tear her from another lover, I have induced the unhappy woman, under the pretence of religion, to abandon a noble young man, and to make a ridiculous match, which will render her miserable for life. For this love I have sacrificed honour, fame, and character. For this love I have renounced God!"

A cry of desperation escaped his mother, and she fainted. The priest, for a moment, felt moved. He turned towards her, to assist her; and then, as if seized with fury afresh, he repressed every softer sentiment.

"Behold your own work, oh miserable father! and behold your punishment! Now go, and publish abroad the infamy of your son! But

no ! You will not do that. It is your own infamy."

He was leaving the room, but he saw his mother still prostrate and senseless—the mother he used to love so tenderly—the mother he still loved. His heart was touched. He went to her, lightly raised her, and looked at her with affection—his countenance at that moment was gentle and expressive of the utmost filial tenderness. He sprinkled water in her face, called upon her tenderly, and a burning tear fell from his eye upon her forehead. She slowly recovered. He kissed her once—twice—he rose, repressed again every gentle emotion—and stood erect, his breast guarded as with a shield of adamant, through which pity should never again find entrance. He looked at his father with an expression combining menace and defiance. His father still stood, rigid and immoveable in his despair, as if stricken by a thunderbolt. He well merited his punishment—but his son was not the less impious !

From that hour the father never saw the son, nor did his mother ever again look upon him. From that day her cheek never regained its

colour. Her gentle smile never more gladdened the hearts of her children, nor softened the breast of her husband. Various rumours were afloat in the town as to the event which could have cast such a shadow over the Lanzini family ; but no one knew the cause with certainty. A few whispered it, but were not believed, all unfavourable reports being hushed by the numerous friends of Don Giuseppe.

A month afterwards, he was installed in the house of Count Alfredini as domestic chaplain. He sent to his brother, as a present, the sum required for his first year's studies at the university. It was accepted, for none of his brothers knew of the scene that had occurred, but imagined that some ordinary difference had arisen between Don Giuseppe and their father, owing to that father's imperious temper.

Signor Lanzini's character underwent a great change from that time. To his family, he became much more gentle, yielding, and affectionate. Not a word more was said about making the other son a priest, which was some comfort to the stricken heart of the mother.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE GOOD OFTEN FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT  
TO DO GOOD, THAN THE EVIL TO DO EVIL.

WHILE these events were taking place, the Countess Belfiore had suspected the true state of Don Giuseppe's feelings, seeing that he succeeded in effecting the marriage between Count Alfredini and Amalia. She grieved profoundly, both for the disappointed hopes of her young friend, Francesco, and for the peril to which poor Amalia was exposed under the pernicious influence of the priest. She felt certain Don Giuseppe had arranged the marriage for the attainment of his own ends, and his exclusion from the will of the Marchioness tended to confirm her suspicion. She therefore eagerly watched every passing occurrence that could affect



Amalia. It is true she had seldom seen her before her marriage, and now she never saw her at all. A conscientious sentiment induced Amalia to forego the pleasure of her company, and, on the part of the Countess, an easily-understood feeling of delicacy prevented her visiting her friend, though they were warmly attached to each other. Poor Amalia's fate deeply interested the compassionate lady, and when she saw that she was not destined to form the happiness of Francesco, she wept for her. But what could she do? She felt a deeply rooted suspicion—and a suspicion nourished under the circumstances, by a person of so much delicate and womanly tact, could hardly fail to be just. Still her suspicion did not give her the right to take steps for remedying the evil; and the prudent parish priest, as we have seen, had dissuaded her from interfering before Amalia's marriage with the Count.

When she learned, however, that Don Giuseppe was really going to enter the Count's house as domestic chaplain, her kind heart was filled with anxiety for the poor Countess. Not that she feared for her virtue. That she believed

to be incorruptible. No one, she was convinced—not even a priest, with his utmost perseverance and subtlety, could overcome it; but she feared that her position, which must already be so far from happy, would be rendered by the priest's presence doubly miserable. In her anxiety therefore to frustrate the harm which he might still do her, she went again to consult with Don Domenico.

He could however say or do nothing in the matter. Most devoutly did he wish that on his first suspicions he had warned Amalia, confronted Don Giuseppe, and freely admonished him—had done, in short, all that a good and honest man could have done. Now he could do nothing, and even to the Countess Belfiore he did not feel at liberty to say anything to second her views, being tied by the ordinances of confession. From these considerations, therefore, when she communicated to him her suspicions, he affected to treat them as too vague. He said it was unreasonable to prejudice the interest of any individual, and impugn his honesty on such grounds; and that she could not do so without failing in charity and Christian prudence. As

to her proposal of mentioning the subject to the Countess Alfredini; could it be right, he asked, on a simple supposition, to excite doubts in her mind with regard to the rectitude of a man whom she held, and perhaps justly, in high estimation? No, she must not think of such a thing. Besides, the dignity of the Countess Belfiore herself would be compromised with the young wife, who so well knew that a warm friendship existed between her and Francesco. To the wife it might appear like an unworthy and dishonourable attempt on the part of the friend of Francesco to excite suspicions in her breast against the man who had induced her to contract an alliance with the house of Alfredini, and she might altogether misinterpret the interference.

Thus did the priest argue to dissuade her from carrying out her intention. Situated as he was, he felt he could do no otherwise. True, in any case, the step proposed by the Countess was an imprudent one, and yet perhaps, under other circumstances, he would have counselled her to even greater imprudence. Again did he reproach himself most severely for his remissness

in failing to ask permission of the dying woman to act in favour of her grand-daughter against the wiles of Don Giuseppe ; but it was now too late. The Countess took her leave, sad at heart that she could not obtain the approbation of the good priest for the accomplishment of what she had felt to be her duty, but which now, from his arguments, she was induced to look upon in a different light. The priest himself secretly wished that she had executed her plan independently of his sanction.

## CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE AND SMOKE ALWAYS BETRAY THEMSELVES.

ALL this time various agitating thoughts occupied the mind of Don Giuseppe. With his acuteness of perception, it was impossible that he could fail to see the false position in which he was about to place himself. He had never breathed his love to living soul, except his unhappy parents ; yet it was, if not discovered, at least suspected by prying curiosity. Idle rumours respecting it were rife in private houses, *caffès*, and everywhere else ; and the conclusions arrived at seemed to be little in his favour. His quick eye could detect a look of curiosity directed towards him, or an ill-concealed simper on the part of the thoughtless, and an involuntary air of gravity in the good and serious on

meeting him. From the hints which fell from his father's lips, moreover, he felt that his character was losing ground, and his good name beginning to suffer. The name of Amalia was not yet mentioned otherwise than with respect, but would it always be so? What would be the consequence, if he entered her house as chaplain? He trembled at the peril he should incur in giving substance to the shadow, and rendering that certain which was as yet only suspected.

But on the other hand, could he renounce the opportunity of living in the same house with Amalia? Could he give up so good an appointment? Love and cupidity both urged him to the contrary. The world might exclaim as it liked: he defied and laughed at it! To live with her, he would defy more formidable powers than evil tongues. Besides, what did it matter to him? Accusations could never be laid against him, because he should never allow a word to escape him capable of betraying him. He had said too much, it was true, in his father's house, blinded by his wrath. His father and mother knew his secret and his dark designs. He was a fool to express himself as he had done—but still he feared

nothing from them. Would his parents accuse and dishonour him? Impossible. Nor had he any reason to fear the priest of Rivalta. He was perfectly satisfied that his mouth was closed. All he had to do then was to use dexterity with the Episcopal Court, in order to render it favourable towards him in this emergency ; and to take the first opportunity of revenging himself upon the priest, who had, he believed, deprived him of the bequest of the Marchioness.

After maturing his plans, he went straightway to the Vicar-General, with whom the reader has already made acquaintance, and of whom he will retain anything but a favourable recollection.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## PHYSIOLOGICAL LECTURE.

THE two men confront each other. The composed and graceful smile of the one, is returned by the affected, loathsome smile of the other, accompanied by the usual disgusting contortion of his lip. The two smiles bear an affinity in their expression of malice, and in the iniquitous disclosures which each of them seems to make. The yellow eye of the one—like the hyena's—assumes an ironical expression of gentleness as it meets the full orb of the other, which scintillates with derision and deceit. In this momentary contact of their visual rays, a mysterious sympathetic fusion arises in the surrounding air, which seems impregnated with contamination



The mal-formed, bejewelled hand of the one, grasps with the energetic force of affection—affection which has its source in the conformity of their dispositions—the well-formed, smooth, white, vigorous hand of the other. These two descendants of the cursed progeny of Cain feel their hearts drawn together by the secret ties of blood. They eye each other with a glance in which a momentary feeling of repugnance may be detected—and an air of constraint is visible on the face of each, which is white and livid as that of a spectre. It is but the momentary repulsion, however, occasioned by the collision of two destructive agents, whose mutual violence retards their fusion. Their recoil and pallor, so sudden and transient, would not have been detected by any eye save their own. They both, however, noted it—and under its influence each endeavoured to hide it under the appearance of a warmer eagerness in greeting the other with courteous smile.—Quick, quick—replace the masks, ye hypocrites!

Two of the most atrocious characters conceivable, stand face to face. These dissemblers wear the priest's collar and long robe, and have

the priest's shaven crown. They are pillars of the church—men of prayer. They carry a Book in their hand, when they present themselves before the people, a Book inculcating peace and holiness, which they with soft words and false smile misrepresent to their hearers—hypocrites ! These consummate ribalds speak words of peace and gentleness, of pardon and charity, while they nourish in their hearts hate and vengeance, yea, even thirst of blood !—hypocrites !

They are equally diverse in appearance and alike in heart, and they present a master spectacle of horror. On the one hand, all that is disgusting and loathsome nature has traced in that scarcely human face, and in those ungainly limbs—in that model of vigorous monstrosity. The other presents a pleasing and harmonious combination of external attractions. Nature has modelled him in a form of lofty and manly beauty. The one gives the idea of an Eastern idol, reeking with the blood of human sacrifices. The other in his lofty bearing seems to present the appearance and attitude of Satan, as if he would boast the dominion of the power of evil on earth. The one is of the race of the In-

quisitors, the other of the Borgias; the one belonging to that school, the other to this.— And these men of appearance so diverse, are so similar in mind!—Man wonders, hell laughs!— True types, perfect models are they of the Roman school, which stands unrivalled for its artistic beauties!

## CHAPTER XIX.

SPECIMEN OF DIPLOMATIC ART EXHIBITED BY  
TWO PRIESTS.

“How delighted I am to see you, my dear Don Giuseppe,” exclaimed the Vicar-General, his mouth widening into a smile, with the most amiable contortions of the lips. “It is so seldom that you favour me with one of your truly welcome visits.”

Don Giuseppe, with a courteous and gentlemanly inclination of the head, and deferential and pleasing smile on his lip, answered,

“I am sure you would not accuse me of negligence, Monsignore, if you knew how much I appreciate and desire the honour of an interview with you, but would rather attribute my long absence to untoward circumstances. I

have had a great deal lately to attend to, in consequence of the death of the Marchioness."

"Your disinterested conduct, Don Giuseppe, with regard to the Fossombroni family, does you much honour. Every one expected that the late Marchioness would have remembered you in her will, and handsomely too. The old lady must have forgotten; and it seems you were too delicate to remind her of her duty."

The words were courteous, and Don Giuseppe thought it better to appear to interpret them as such. He cast down his eyes, as if with dignified humility; but in reality to hide a glance of indignation either against the Rector, or the memory of the Marchioness. The Rector's words were uttered in a slight tone of sarcasm, and accompanied by an indefinable smile of malicious complacency, which produced an effect on Don Giuseppe's heart as if it were punctured with a red hot instrument. He contented himself, however, with replying softly,

"I acted in accordance with my principles."

"Your principles do you honour," said the Rector, with the same apparently courteous, but

really ironical manner. "Your conduct is warmly applauded by every one, and by the Bishop himself. All look upon you with admiration, and hold you up as a model to others."

This was certainly the most cruel plan of torturing Don Giuseppe's heart. The Rector knew all, and was aware of the suspicions that existed of Don Giuseppe's love for Amalia. He desired therefore to taunt and rebuke him—but in a manner which he employed towards those with whom he wished to keep outwardly in friendship. It was his plan to wound his victims, while he appeared to be caressing them; and they were constrained to thank him for the torture inflicted by the melodious inflections of his tongue, and the clerical gentleness of manner and look. He was silent for a moment, but Don Giuseppe would not retort upon him. Both hid their secret intentions, in order to retain the appearance of friendship. Don Giuseppe desired to effect his plan of entering the Alfredini family with the approbation of the Curia; and as this greatly depended upon the Rector, he felt it a delicate matter to touch

upon. The Rector on his part desired to retain Don Giuseppe as a friend and ally; and hence was willing to overlook his doubts respecting the strict propriety of his conduct. Moreover both nourished a sentiment of hatred, deep though hidden, against the same individual—the priest of Rivalta—and each could be infinitely serviceable to the other in compassing his schemes of vengeance. For these reasons the slight indications of sarcasm and enmity noticeable on their first meeting, quickly vanished, and they were soon engaged in friendly conference, each employing consummate art in bringing his neighbour to the point desired.

“The parish priest,” said the Rector, “will find his income greatly increased by the will of the Marchioness; and I truly rejoice, for he is a good and zealous man.”

Don Giuseppe knew that the pleasure of the Rector was not very dissimilar from his own; but he merely replied,—

“Yes; and now that the proceeds of his benefice are increased, his means of doing good will be still greater, and he will be able to be still more hospitable.”

This was a malicious insinuation, for the hospitality already exercised by the priest was distasteful to the clerical dignities, his friends being all enlightened men, averse to the schemes of the clerical Court.

The Rector replied, "For my part, I should be better pleased if he did not invite so much company. I think it would be better if, instead of entertaining the rich, he would think of those who require his assistance in his own parish."

"He certainly does a great deal of good," said Don Giuseppe, "and he does it so prudently, that the parish rejoices in having such a man for a priest; nor would his parishioners listen to any complaints on that ground."

Thus under the guise of praise, he wished to insinuate in the Rector's mind that it would be of no use attacking him on the side of charity.

"Oh yes," returned the Rector, "he zealously fulfils all his parish duties, and is quite an adept in making himself valued at his proper worth,"—thus hinting, that the respect shown him was the effect of artifice on his part, and not as it in reality was, the reward of his honesty, zeal and charity.



"He is certainly" continued the Rector, "one of the best priests in the diocese, and his conduct affords no scope for scandal in any respect. He is very different from many others, through whom my task of remedying evil is rendered truly onerous. Nevertheless, I still cannot say he is a good priest, and it afflicts me to the very bottom of my heart."

"I cannot believe him to be other than a good priest," said Don Giuseppe artfully. "Such he is in appearance; such the world believes him to be; and I have no right to judge otherwise."

The Rector perceived from this cautious reply, that Don Giuseppe detested the priest equally with himself; a gleam of satisfaction shone in his eye, and he said,

"Come, Don Giuseppe, tell me honestly, as if you were speaking to your Confessor. Do you sincerely believe the priest to be what he appears?"

"I have no real and tangible argument to advance on the opposite side," was the cautious reply.

"But if you had a certain proof of his not

being a religious man, would it be contrary to what you think of him?"

"I must beg you to excuse me, if I decline answering your question," said he, fearing to commit himself by throwing off the mask too soon. "Heaven be praised, I am free from those tasks of surveillance and serious duties towards the Curia that devolve upon you, and therefore, any investigation on my part would be inopportune and officious."

"What do you mean, Don Giuseppe?" exclaimed the Rector, raising his eyes to the ceiling so as to leave little more of them visible than their yellow whites. "You must allow me to tell you that I think you are wrong. Ought we not all to exert ourselves for the salvation of souls, and discovery of error? Is it not our duty to prevent the wolf from entering among the lambs to tear and devour them? and above all, if the wolf assumes the garb of the lamb, should we not unmask him?"

"But I do not understand how your observations apply to the Priest of Rivalta, since he commits no excesses of any kind in the eyes of the world."

“ No ; but suppose he commits them in eyes commissioned by God to watch over souls, that they may not be seduced into error by the wicked ”—

Here his countenance assumed an expression of malignity worthy of one of the satellites of Rome, who pretend to be the ministers of God’s justice.

“ I leave out of the question,” continued the Rector, “ the perfect indifference with which he treats the orders of the Clerical Court, by not wearing the *talare*, instead of the garments of sin—the coat instead of the gown ; and also his manner of performing the holy rites, which indicates carnal indifference rather than spiritual concentration and piety. I leave out of the question too the opposition he makes to the holy reforms of the Curia,”—(the Rector had hardly become Vicar-General before he showed himself an ardent reformer, re-imposing the barbarous laws of preceding ages, which had fallen into desuetude)—“ the party that he excites against them and the measures that he adopts to prevent other priests from submitting to them. All this, I grant, is no clear proof of heresy ; but still, I

very much fear he is a heretic. It was on this account he was compelled to perform the exercises in the convent last spring. We had no valid ground of accusation against him, and without proof, the Court will never consent to his dismissal; but I feel convinced he is a dangerous man."

"Certainly these are serious matters," said Don Giuseppe, "and I am extremely grieved to hear them. Of course I cannot doubt them, hearing them from you. But allow me to remark, Monsignore, that you may be mistaken in what you have heard; for he has no such clerical persons about him who might be able to disclose his real character." This was said by Don Giuseppe in the hope of getting a watch set over the priest.

"We had the means of knowing all," answered the Rector, alluding to the poor clerk; "but he eluded our vigilance, and we have no longer that resource. Most gladly should we avail ourselves of every lawful expedient to detect evil and advance the honour of God."

A lawful expedient, indeed, to betray a man

through the means of one of his own dependents receiving shelter under his roof !

“ His means are now increased,” said Don Giuseppe, as if reflecting ; “ the duties of the church service are augmented by the bequest of the Marchioness. It will be difficult for him to attend to all, and a chaplain will be indispensable.”

The Rector felt delighted at the suggestion. It was the point he ardently desired to reach, but he felt it difficult of attainment without the co-operation of Don Giuseppe. To place a chaplain in the priest's house would be an effectual way of watching him, and perhaps effecting his ruin. He greatly desired to place over him, a fixed inimical eye, ceaseless in its watch, that should scrutinize his every movement, action, and thought ; an informer that would treasure up every word, and repeat it ; a domestic spy, who should be no less able to keep watch over him, than the father over the son, or the husband over the wife. This he could secure by fastening upon him in his own house a chaplain who was devoted to the Rector himself. No difficulty would be found in providing such an one

among the many who had been taken by that reverend person from the plough, placed in the seminary, and made priests, with the well-understood, though tacit agreement, that they were to devote themselves, body and soul, to their patron's service, and do all his bidding, even to playing the part of traitors. In the course of a few years the Rector had educated twenty such, whom he found invaluable to him in tracking and discovering his enemies, betraying them in their houses, and dragging them forth to destroy them, as the hunter tracks the animal he torments to the quiet of his retreat, and drives him forth, bewildering him with the deafening sound of the horns, the cracking of whips, and the barking of dogs.

"A chaplain would be very convenient," answered the Rector. "It is necessary, as you say, to have one, on account of the increased duties of the church: and, should the priest be inclined to heterodoxy, the presence of his lodger might act as a salutary restraint."

Don Giuseppe gave the just interpretation to the Rector's words, though he appeared not to see through them, and he replied—

"Yes, it is a good idea, provided a person be chosen who would not be influenced by Don Domenico's irreligious principles," and he would have added, "provided he would not disappoint your Lordship's wishes."

They looked at each other for a moment, and their souls sympathized. They understood each other's secret thoughts, without the necessity of uttering them.

"In this matter," resumed the Rector, "which is so important for the good of souls and the glory of God, you ought to lend me a hand, dear Don Giuseppe; a zeal like yours can accomplish much."

"I do not know that I can be useful in any way," answered the other, hesitatingly, not feeling disposed to mix himself up much in the affair without making a market of his services.

"Oh, yes, indeed," said the Rector, emphatically, "you can do a great deal. You can lead the people to see the necessity for a chaplain, by introducing the subject with dexterity. Good ideas never occur to the people without being suggested to them. You would soon see how they relished the notion of such an appointment,

and, by clever management, you could get them to request it. All this you could effect without any difficulty, and you would be doing service to the holy cause, and no harm to the priest ; whom, after all, I esteem a worthy man."

Don Giuseppe reflected a moment, and then said—

" I will do all that is compatible with decorum and Christian charity."

This was promising everything, because, according to his system, decorum consisted in working secretly, without exposing himself, and Christian charity in sacrificing his enemy. He therefore accepted the task suggested to him, and from that moment these two models of priestly artifice were united in the bonds of an iniquitous alliance.

Having entered into this covenant of deceit against justice, they quickly agreed on other points. The Vicar-General did not in reality approve of Don Giuseppe entering Count Alfredini's house as chaplain, and would gladly have hindered it. To speak the truth, whether from conscience or astuteness, he liked to prevent evil, when the evil could be of no utility to



himself. In this case, however, by raising no objection to Don Giuseppe's plan, he hoped to induce him to become an accomplice, and therefore he acquiesced. Another consideration was of weight with him. Don Giuseppe being dependent on a noble family, would of necessity come in contact with the aristocracy, and, with his dexterity and influence, might be useful to himself in any matter of pressing importance. The power of the Vicar-General hung upon a very slender thread—the life of an old man of eighty-three. When the Bishop died, his present authority, without some strong influence, would be altogether sacrificed, and he would abruptly descend from his pinnacle of power. Under these circumstances, he unhesitatingly accorded the permission Don Giuseppe sought, notwithstanding the suspicions he entertained relative to the other's desire of entering the family; and Don Giuseppe went his way, delighted that his schemes had met with no opposition in the quarter where he most dreaded it. He felt that he had achieved a great triumph!

## CHAPTER XX.

THEORY NOT GENERALLY KNOWN RELATIVE  
TO SPIES.

A MONTH after the memorable conference of the two priests, Don Domenico had a chaplain in his house ; not one chosen by himself, but one forced upon him by the Rector. The new chaplain was a young man of uncouth manners and uncultivated mind. He was lank and ungainly in person, his eyes were sunken and viperish, and his cheeks hollow. His face was small, with pointed nose and chin ; his fingers long and crooked. He spoke softly, in a weak and broken voice, and with a pretended air of piety. He was intolerant, and totally ignorant of the principles of honour or social requirements. Immersed in superstition, he had sold himself, body

and soul, to the Rector, who had raised him from abject poverty, and in a few years transformed him into a priest. Had the Rector said to him, "Kill that man, and you will be secure of paradise," he would have killed him unhesitatingly. It was much easier to obey the injunction, "Watch that man with untiring vigilance, and you will acquire great merit and much good to your soul, because he is suspected of endangering the souls of others. Always keep your eye fixed upon him, in every place, and on every occasion ; watch him when he eats—see whether the dishes are forbidden or not. Listen to his conversation in his most confidential moments—when he is least watchful over himself: seize upon every imprudent syllable, and report it. See with whom he associates, and observe whom he likes and whom he dislikes. Discover whether he is well-affected to the clerical authorities. Notice how long, and at what hours, he prays ; whether his lips move fast or slow in repeating the prayers ; whether he performs the ceremonies demanded by the office, and what is his bearing in church. Learn whom he confesses, and how he treats his penitents ;

whether he is familiar with young men, whether he frequents secular society. In short, keep your eye always upon him. Woe to you, if you fail in any particular ! If you neglect to tell all, you will incur the displeasure of the Curia, and the anger of God, who will surely punish you for your breach of duty."

Such were the instructions given to the coadjutor of the priest. He, in his uprightness and integrity, feared no one, accepted him with indifference, and treated him with honest kindness.

In such a case, a spy employed by government would perhaps have felt compunction, and been indisposed to the task allotted him ; but not so a spy of the church. The clerical powers are more clever in securing information. The artifice of priests far outvies that of despots, and Rome may be taken as the perfect model of a searching and sanguinary tyranny.

The spies of despots may be found in *caffès*, in the streets, in all places of general resort. They insidiously listen to your discourse, keeping near you, standing before or behind, as if in innocent abstraction. You meet spies at parties,

balls, and theatres. You find them in houses of play and resorts of pleasure. You often see them well-dressed, bearded, moustached. You find them glittering fresh from the toilette, making great pretensions to gallantry. You see them honoured, well-behaved, titled. You meet them in the gilded saloons of the great, and you find them in the humble cabaret frequented by the poor. You find them in prison even, under the guise of companions in misfortune. You find them everywhere and under every circumstance, except in your own house. Tyranny does not so readily find the means of insinuating the enemy into the sanctuary of your home, within your domestic walls. The privacy of your own house is sacred against the lay traitor. You sit at table with your family, feeling perfectly tranquil : enjoying the fireside chat with dear friends whom you have known for years and years, you pour forth, with unlimited confidence, your every thought. Unheeding, you utter incautious words, fearless of prisons and tyrants. Your words travel not beyond the walls ; your servants you know are above suspicion, and you

fear them not, except in very rare cases. Ye despots ! come and learn the system of espionage as it is practised in perfection by the priests of Rome. Oh, the priests are, in verity, a race to be dreaded ! They establish spies in your own house,—nay, create them in the persons of your brother, your sister, your very wife ! The poniard may be implanted in your breast by the hand of your own mother, whom the priests convert into an inexorable spy. Even an honest priest may be compelled to receive another priest within his walls, with smiling countenance, to admit him to partake of his bread at his table, and join his family as a member of it, for he has no means of resisting. Oh, the priests are indeed a terrible race ! They carry the art of doing harm to wondrous perfection. Their system of oppression combines religious tyranny with political, the former preponderating over the latter. The priests are indeed a terrible race of men, and their misdeeds they perform with serene conscience and undaunted courage. They do all for the glory of God and the spiritual good of mankind !

Thus, for the good of souls, was a spy placed in the house of the poor priest of Rivalta, and Don Giuseppe was encouraged to enter Count Alfredini's house as his chaplain.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LIFE OF THE GREAT IS A DESERT THROUGH  
WHICH THEY WANDER IN DESOLATION OF  
SPIRIT.

IN these times of forms, restrictions, and regulations; of mechanism, engineering, and experiment—sentiment is lowered by the dominion of speculation, both analytic and scientific, as well as commercial. Sentiment is submitted to the press and to the restraint of the exigencies and usages of society, as replete with forms as science itself. Sentiment is analyzed and made to pass through as many disorganizing transformations as if subjected, like matter, to chemical experiments. The tendency of the age is to submit sentiment to dissection, even to the cutting up



of the very organism, instead of regarding it as a whole—a power, a force, a general element in the synthetic activity of the universe.

Privileged beings, who feel the presence of sentiment within them, as in primitive natures, are sorely confounded and banished from their proper sphere. They find no sympathy, no response, no mode of acting according to the powerful exigencies of their spirit. They burst their bonds and emancipate themselves from the prosaic routine of modern life—yet find it impossible to create an element in which to live the life they desire. Hence grief, disenchantment, persecution, the experience of perpetual bitterness, contempt of the world which so ill appreciates them, or voluntary retirement from a world they do not understand, and disdain to study.

The world heeds them not, but leaves them to the solitude of their own souls, never seeking to offer them consolation. Little interest takes the world in these eccentric, querulous and haughty beings. Little does it concern the proud sons of poverty who, though in rags and want,

refuse to bow the head before the powerful of the earth, but, poor though they are, defy them with as much haughty boldness as though the rich sought from them condescension and protection.

Thus do these unhappy beings create for themselves, in passing through life, troubles which perchance, did they better consider times and men, they might avoid. Struggling on in the midst of the world, not only do they refuse to accommodate themselves to its requirements, but contemn and despise it—and the world repays them with interest.

What a tragedy of grief and misery ! Poverty is their companion, sitting beside them at their scant, unsavoury meal. Sadness is their sister, ever accompanying them in their miserable wanderings over the face of the earth. Death is their betrothed, and they sigh for its hymeneal festival, with its gloomy adjuncts, its dull, dark banqueting hall ; their guests shadows, dead men's skulls the cup from which they drink the waters of oblivion. They lay then down silently in their tomb to become the prey of corruption

and putrefaction, never more to arise until summoned by angelic trumpet—the only sound which can penetrate the tomb, and awake the dead from their long slumber.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE TORCH OF LOVE IS EXTINGUISHED, AND  
THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE DESERT IS  
DARK AND TOILSOME.

SUCH was the grief that Francesco experienced in the solitude of his soul, although he shared not with others the inheritance of poverty. He felt as if he belonged to other times and not to ours. He no longer hoped for happiness ; it seemed to have become impossible to him ; nor could he bring himself to exercise the activity of his generous and powerful mind in a society already past maturity, and declining under the inevitable influence of forms devoid of spirit. Thus he found himself a being wandering abroad on the earth, enjoying neither consolation nor repose. In this fatal malady of a diseased mind, he drew not

the comfort from Religion that she alone can give. That source he foolishly forgot at the very moment, when of all others he most needed the healing waters of consolation which she pours forth to those who seek them. Alas ! Francesco neglected that fount of consolation !

What a life was his ! He hated books, and no longer sought knowledge in their pages, nor oblivion in study. He hated company, nor from the social joys of life did he seek pleasure ; they were become hateful to him. He hated the light of day, which represented the world in vivid, gay and splendid colouring, and the beauties which surrounded him seemed only to mock him who dwelt amidst desolation. He hated the night, and its tranquillity and silence. To him it was peopled by monsters roaming abroad to overwhelm men with grief and despair—forerunners of sighs and groans, which the morrow will bring them. He abhorred sleep, because, while subject to its influence, deriding faces were ever present to him. He hated life, because it served but to render him conscious of the pains that tormented his soul, of the worm that gnawed

his heart. What was life to him?—Objectless, hopeless, aimless.

Thus, amidst the bustle and gaiety of University life did he remain alone, completely isolated, without a soul to whom he could unburden his heart, and from whom he could receive comfort. His grief was too profound and desperate to admit of consolation from the tender communings of friendship, which, by assuming a share of his grief, so greatly lightens the load of the sufferer. It is a condition of the nature of man, that when his heart is moved by gentle and tender affections, he displays the expansion of it socially; when suffering the desperate grief of a soul bowed down with affliction, he feels a tendency to isolation. He withdraws from all consolation, and finds a voluptuous pleasure in ferociously tormenting himself. He luxuriates with savage enjoyment in perpetrating cruelty upon himself by aggravating his pains. He passes hours and hours of his weary life in dwelling upon his sorrows, as if he enjoyed the recollection, and would mercilessly drive the lacerating knife deeper and

deeper into his heart. Not more cruel is the tyrant whose eye sparkles with complacency at sight of the blood of his victim. So does man become misanthropic—and Francesco was a misanthrope.

His fellow-students felt a pang of sorrow, it is true, at seeing him thus absorbed in his sad and profound melancholy; but he fled from them, and it cost them no great sacrifice to give him up. They were content to leave him alone to feed upon his sadness, without troubling themselves to investigate deeply the cause of his grief, and without manifesting any strong desire to offer a remedy.

The scholastic year drew to an end, and the examinations took place. Fantoni went through them, not because he desired to prosecute his studies, for they had grown distasteful to him, and he now felt his future career a perfect matter of indifference. Natural pride, however, made him unwilling to see himself humiliated in the eyes of men, even though he no longer loved, and perhaps despised them. He was unwilling to be held in contempt, and he had

also a purer motive. He would not afflict his parents, whom he still loved.

In the autumn—the time of the vacation—he did not return home, but assigning as a reason the desire of improvement, he solicited from his parents permission to travel, which was gladly accorded, and the means of doing so were furnished him. He avoided passing even one day at home, not because he was indifferent about seeing his father and mother, but because he desired to keep hidden from their eyes the signs of grief too visible in his face. He feared to sadden their hearts, and desired especially to spare the sensitive feelings of his affectionate mother.

During his journey he was utterly incurious and indifferent to everything. He observed nothing; nothing excited his attention, neither monuments, pictures, nor men. He journeyed from place to place—but his eye delighted neither in the beautiful scenes of nature, nor in the works of art. He studied neither forms nor customs, neither manners nor characters. He might have been mistaken for an idiot, had not his lofty bearing, the inert intelligence of his



eye, and the knowledge betrayed by the few words he uttered when compelled to speak, plainly declared his powerful and masculine intellect. He was looked upon, therefore, as an eccentric, extravagant man.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE VALIANT WARRIOR ADAPTS HIS STRATEGICAL PLANS TO THE FORTUNE OF WAR.

DON GIUSEPPE had been settled as chaplain in Count Alfredini's house a month. The Count was slowly recovering ; he no longer kept his bed, but could leave his room, and could even enjoy the air occasionally in the garden ; but his feeble frame was more debilitated than ever, and it seemed doubtful if the glow of vitality would ever again revisit his cheek. He ate little, nor did the nourishing viands prepared for him appear to afford much sustenance, or restore to him much of his lost vigour : still he was cheerful. He did not appear conscious that the springs of his existence were so enfeebled,

and he believed that he should gradually regain his former state of health.

The Countess continued to pay him the most delicate attention, anticipating his every want, consulting his minutest wish, and never failing in her patient care towards him. Her strict sense of duty rendered her a most affectionate wife, and she redoubled her tender cares in proportion as she experienced the satisfaction of feeling that she was what she ought to be as a wife towards her husband. She unceasingly strove to banish from her breast every thought which could render her attentions hypocritical. Had she not done so, her conduct would have seemed in her own eyes like wearing a mask. Unhappy woman! you wear no mask! you are too good, too pure, too virtuous; but though your virtue is not simulated, your mental suffering is dissembled—not to others, but to yourself.

Love still filled her soul, and love still filled the soul of Don Giuseppe—love unrelaxed, undiminished, more imperious than ever, though less impetuous. Woe to him, had he allowed her to suspect him! Woe to him had he fur-

nished the world with the confirmation of its suspicions. He tried with all his might to disarm suspicion, but he found it a difficult task now that the world had taken the fancy to suspect him. The world has neither prudence nor charity. Does it once see an evil possible, it believes it probable; seeing it probable, it believes it certain. Against the opinion of the world there is no appeal, no method of disproving, rebutting, repelling, or overcoming its attacks. The world is not one man; it consists not of individuals,—it is opinion. When opinion once takes an unfavourable shape, it is with difficulty corrected and vanquished, but ever grows stronger, unless the cause be removed. The cause was not removed, but rather strengthened in Don Giuseppe's case, and hence it was necessary to employ his utmost prudence and astuteness in order to turn popular opinion in his favour—a thing most difficult, if not impossible, in his actual position. Still more had he need of these qualities to render Amalia indifferent to the reports which might reach her, by his respectful and reserved demeanour. This was possible, and he succeeded. He

was careful to avoid being importunate, though he availed himself of every circumstance that afforded a pretext for being with her. He did not attempt to control her with imperious religious exhortations, but did his best, in the gentlest and most unexceptionable manner, to increase superstitious tendencies in her mind, by initiating her in a thousand practices which rendered her dependent upon him, and consequently afforded him plausible pretexts for seeing her constantly. When he spoke to her it was always in the tone of the most proper friend, nor could the least shadow of intolerance be discovered in his behaviour. Overbearingness of any kind was not necessary to the accomplishment of his plans with the Countess Alfredini, as it had been in the case of the Lady Amalia. The Countess became accustomed to him, and her sweet and gentle soul laid aside every particle of aversion. She thought so highly of his present conduct, that she argued from it the propriety of his past. She conversed with him, if not freely, for, as we have before remarked, her words since her marriage had been very sparing—yet with the confidential kindness of a sister, and she

frequently sought his counsel. Both with regard to spiritual and domestic matters, she felt his advice most valuable, and consulted him without repugnance or hesitation.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DESIGNING PRIEST'S MIND IS EVER  
TORMENTED.

DON GIUSEPPE saw, to his regret, that the Count was better, and that he appeared to be advancing towards health, and consequently his disquiet increased. New reasons occurred to him to excite him to evil ; evil passions follow fast one upon another, and give no truce. Such was the case with the Chaplain. His jealousy, which had slept awhile, awoke in all its pristine fury. But what could arouse his jealousy ? Had the young people met again ? again enjoyed the transports of loving minds ? Certainly not—this was utterly impossible. The good and virtuous Countess Alfredini will always

be religiously pure, even in mind, at whatever expense to love. It is impossible that Francesco can again arouse jealousy in his rival's breast, because he well knows that, invincible though her passion may be, she is for ever separated from him by his rival's arts. This knowledge must suffice to quell all feeling against Francesco. If it is not he who revives the evil propensity, who then can it be?—Who but the Count! How can the imbecile Count awaken the passion of jealousy in the heart of the bold, handsome, healthy, and ardent Don Giuseppe? Strange though it may seem, it was even so. The Count excited in Don Giuseppe's mind a fury of jealousy as strong as that which he had felt against Francesco, though of a different nature. He envied him the possession of his treasure. He looked upon him as a miser who grasps his gold in his hand, looks at it admiringly, and loves it dearly, but still is far from appreciating it as he ought, being incapable of making use of it. The miser loves gold, but knows not the virtues of its influence in the world, and is incapable of employing it with the activity and judgment of the merchant and the



man of pleasure—the true judges of the value of money.

Don Giuseppe was continually repeating to himself, “So much pains, then, so many dishonourable arts, so much manœuvring have even been employed to throw this inappreciable treasure into the arms of this idiot! And I am to be his tranquil spectator, and smile upon the felicity which I have secured him; this, too, at the price of my own dishonour and my eternal wretchedness. I am to be a tranquil spectator of the fulsome endearments of this half-witted boy, who has never become a man. There is, then, thought he, no, no remedy! But was there no remedy? When does Satan’s invention fail for the production of evil? When does he ever desert the followers who need his counsels?

The Count was weak of mind and superstitious, delicate, and of feeble and sluggish temperament; these elements of his nullification were all-sufficient in the hands of the formidable priest.

## CHAPTER XXV.

EVEN BIGOTS REVEL IN THE REGIONS OF  
ROMANCE.

THE Count, as will have been divined, was no great reader. He rarely taxed his mind to consider subjects which he did not understand. Science had no attractions for him, nor could it be expected that it should have, for his mind was wholly incapable of appreciating its beauties. All works, except the most simple stories, were to him as the books of the Sybils, whose sense was impenetrable to ordinary mortals. But let it not be understood that he was an enemy to the object composed of paper and impressed with characters, called a book. He might be inimical to the contents, but not to the receptacle. Books he had in abundance. He

prided himself on the display of some thousand volumes inherited from his forefathers, and still more upon his own small collection. No profane books entered into the composition of his private library, not even the most carefully selected. All that he knew, or wished to know, of literature was gathered from sacred works. His were books of devotion, books of meditation, books of prayers addressed to God, to the Madonna, and to all the saints in Paradise: whether the saints are in that blessed region or not is but of little consequence—Rome considers them as so located, and therefore we are bound to believe that Paradise is their veritable habitation. Most copious, too, was his collection of the lives of those saints. He had them in a profusion of volumes, and he had them in abridgements. He had then in alphabetical order, and he had them chronologically arranged. He had them, moreover, arranged according to the order of the calendar, that is to say, the life of each saint for each day, according to the commemoration of the office.

A few days before the 17th of July, Don Giuseppe had suggested to the poor man to per-

form every day the devotional task of reading the life of the particular saint for whom the office was said. He assured him that he would find it a most edifying and salutary practice, that he would thus associate himself with the Roman priesthood in his religious exercises, and could invoke the blessings of heaven in favour of himself and others. Those who are of weak understanding generally give themselves up to religious practices with all the ardour of which they are capable; because, without mental fatigue, the individual is kept in some degree of activity by the numerous minute ceremonies accompanying these exercises. Thus, the tedious hours of an aimless existence are passed with a diminution of their weariness in the observance of an infinitude of trivial practices.

The Count was not slow, therefore, in following Don Giuseppe's advice. How many thanks did the saintly devotee bestow upon the good priest, who had provided him with so fitting and agreeable a method of benefitting his soul! He felt that it was truly a magnificent idea with which Don Giuseppe had inspired him.

In reading the lives of the saints for each day

the Count chose from his collection the longest and most elaborate histories. Magnificent stories they were, abounding with miracles of all sorts, and descriptions, great and small, all sanctioned by Rome, and to be received by the poor in spirit with the same faith with which the true Christian believes in the divinity of Christ.

These lives contain much that is impious, obscene, ridiculous, and horrible. They present a monstrous amalgamation of wild tales, histories of fanatics, traditional legends of barbarous nations, matters celestial and infernal, all massed together, to be read with the blind faith of childhood. Such are the novels and romances that form the reading of bigots, and they enjoy them with the same ardour with which young and fanciful girls give themselves up to the perusal of those tales of love, with which modern taste furnishes so abundantly the idlers of the world.

The 17th of July arrived, on that day the life of Saint Alexius was read. It was to this life in particular that Don Giuseppe desired to draw the Count's attention, in order that he might converse with him upon it afterwards, as he had

done on preceding days with reference to the other saints. He had, indeed, habituated the Count to this practice, for this especial purpose. The legend is as follows.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## HISTORY OF SAINT ALEXIUS.

ALEXIUS was the son of a Roman patrician of the fifth century. Having been brought up amidst all the comforts of life, its splendours and its luxuries, he had acquired those delicate habits which tend to enervate the mind; and it might be expected that he would have shown a stronger inclination for carnal enjoyments than for leading a spiritual life in the fear of God. But such was not the case, for Alexius was distinguishable from his associates by his piety, while yet a boy; and as he grew up, he increased in virtue and devotion; so that at the period of life when other young men thought

only of pleasure, dissipation, and illicit attachments, he was altogether devoted to prayer, to the church, to self-discipline, and to the consideration of the good of his soul. His spirit soared heavenward, higher and higher, and more and more walked in communion with God. Though a man of earth, earthy, and composed of this crumbling dust, he had nothing in common with other men, and, by Almighty Grace, he experienced none of the perverse human inclinations which lead men to sin. He never suffered his eyes to rest upon a tempting object, but watchfully guarded them, and kept them humbly cast down. Having arrived at an age to choose a companion, and perpetuate his name by means of a holy alliance, he, neither desirous nor averse as regarded his own inclinations, but solely in obedience to the will of his Christian parents, took to wife a gentle maiden of lofty estate, and of still loftier piety. She seemed made expressly for him ; handsome as he, good as he, and, if not as perfect a Christian as he, still wondrously well-suited to him. What happiness did this union promise to the fortunate young man ! Think what a combination it was of hea-



venly and earthly felicity, to possess, in addition to youth, beauty, riches, and honours, a charming and Christian wife, with whom to participate in the innocent pleasures which Providence had so freely bestowed upon him even in this life ! And yet, so it was, that in the very height of his beatitude, while the marriage ceremony was being performed, he felt his heart overcome by its own transports ; he feared, lest in the midst of his enjoyment he should forget God, and the horror of that thought affected him so powerfully as to cut them short. An inspiration from heaven, a sublime resolve, darted across his brain. Should he leave all and everything dear to him in life, father, and mother, and wife, and follow Christ ? This inspiration, which came from on high, he would not oppose. He cast his eyes on his lovely bride, and saw her resplendent with human beauty, and was confirmed in his holy resolution. He saw joy painted in the face of his beloved parents, and thought of the enjoyments that awaited him through the whole course of his natural life—but his resolve only grew the stronger to abandon all for Christ.

Thus Alexius, without saying a word, or

bidding one adieu to his gentle bride or beloved parents, all alone, without money, having exchanged his splendid attire for a covering the most abject, and eradicating from his heart every earthly affection, or rather stifling his feelings by divine assistance, in order the better to serve God, turned his back upon the paternal mansion, and left those who loved him dearest, plunged in the most overwhelming sorrow.

The holy man took up his abode at Edessa, but without breathing a syllable as to who he was, and the holy action he had performed. He never made any enquiries about the friends he had left, his desolate parents and disconsolate bride. But desolate and disconsolate we should not say, for though neither the one nor the others could look for help from man, all soon found consolation in God. They submitted to his decrees, and lived, though in sorrow of soul, yet in holiness and in resignation of spirit.

Alexius lived eighteen years at Edessa, serving the Lord with all fear and humility. He avoided observation as much as possible, but, dedicating himself to works of Christian charity, and absorbed in offering spiritual consolation to

the faithful in their afflictions, and propagating the faith of Christ, he could not escape the notice of the admiring people and clergy. He was so distinguished for virtue and piety, that he was the object of the veneration of all, and all recognized him as the man of God, though ignorant of what he had sacrificed in the world to follow and serve the Lord. At length, however, it was discovered that the holy pilgrim, a stranger to all, was really a man of noble condition and large possessions, and no sooner was he aware that this had become known, than he thought of escaping the honours which were preparing for him, frightened, in his humbleness of spirit, at the publicity which threatened to make him the object of popular consideration ; so, quietly, and without communicating his intention to any one, he left Edessa, and in humble vestments repaired to Rome, presented himself at his father's house as an object of charity, seeking an asylum and a crust of bread. Shelter and food were bestowed upon him, but such as he might look for in his apparent condition.

A miserable lodging was appointed him under the staircase, and the fragments rejected by the

servants, were thrown to him for his sustenance. From his wretched hiding place he observed the holy woman, his spouse, in spiritual bonds, whose virgin beauty had ripened to mature splendour, and was the witness of her unceasing regret and melancholy resignation for the loss of her bridegroom, whose memory, notwithstanding the eighteen years that had elapsed, she cherished as warmly as ever. He saw too the incessant grief and gentle submission of his dear mother and father, who were still living. He found that the hope of again beholding him existed in the breasts of all, and yet he would not discover himself. A single word, uttered by him, would have made him the happiest of men, carressed by those he loved, honoured and admired; but he never spoke it. Many years he passed as a beggar, despised and neglected in the house, where he might have been master; worse treated than the lowest of the servants—that house where, would he have made himself known, there would have been no limit to the homage paid him. On a crust of bread, thrown to him like a dog, he existed for years in that house where riches in abundance, like a river, flowed—

riches, not belonging to others, but inherited by himself.

His heart remained true to his heroic determination ; he lived poor and despised to serve his God, and this life he led for years and years in holy patience and humbleness of spirit, obtaining the victory over himself whenever earthly affections assailed his breast, and never cast down, nor diverted from his holy purpose of sacrificing all and everything for love of God and his service.

At length he expired in the embrace of the Lord, still unknown to all in the house ; but he left a writing, containing his history, which caused floods of tears, though of joy rather than grief to be shed by his holy wife and Christian parents.

The legend concludes by saying, “ he flourished in the reign of the Emperor Honorius, Innocent III. being Bishop of Rome, and is honoured in the Calendars of the Latins, Greeks, Syrians, Maronites and Armenians. His interment was celebrated with the greatest pomp on the Aventine Hill. His body was found there in 1216, in the ancient church of St. Boniface, while

Honorius III. sat in St. Peter's Chair, and at this day it is the most precious treasure of a sumptuous church which bears his name jointly with that of St. Boniface, gives title to a Cardinal, and is in the hands of Hieronymites."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## EFFECTS OF A FAMOUS LECTURE, AND CONSEQUENT REACTION.

THE reading of this history was succeeded by the customary daily conference between Don Giuseppe and the Count. From that day forward a marked change was observable in the Alfredini family. The Count's admiration and regard for his wife appeared to increase, and he seemed charmed to have her with him as a sister. Indeed, it was a blessing for him, in his natural weakness and slow decline of life, and in the gradual decay of his mental energies, that he was favoured with the consolations of sisterly tenderness. The Countess's brow seemed adorned with a ray of purity more visible than ever. Her angelic smile seemed even more

maidenly than before, and the tranquil expression of her countenance had never been so noticeable. Her attentive care of the Count increased in tenderness, if possible, and now seemed the effect of a combination of wifely affection with the gratitude of a sister.

Don Giuseppe felt little satisfied with his own work. Evil actions rarely enhance the happiness of any man, even though they succeed to the full. He found that with the worst intentions, he had accomplished a good which he neither expected nor desired. He saw the satisfaction of the Count, ridiculed him as a fool, and nourished for him increased hatred and contempt. But he hated his own work more than ever, when he saw so marked an expression of satisfaction, peace, and content in the face of Amalia, as the result of that famous day's reading. He experienced the most bitter mortification in thinking of it, nor could he be deceived in his conclusions, considering his knowledge of human nature. On that day he read in Amalia's face that her love for Fantoni was not yet overcome. The serenity of the content visible in her countenance, were not alone the effect of



holy purity of sentiment—not that exclusively—but were the result also of self-satisfaction at remaining faithful to Francesco, although for ever separated from him.

Not that the young wife confessed so much to herself—she would have trembled at the idea. It was a secret sentiment on which her mind dared not dwell. Who can control the involuntary instinctive impressions of sentiment?

Don Giuseppe read her heart, and saw what was passing there, and his own writhed in torment. He himself was the instrument of this triumph of her invincible and deep-seated affection. He cursed his own work; he would gladly have retraced his steps, and recalled the past—but it was impossible. By his own contrivances, effected with so much priestly artifice, Amalia would remain faithful to Francesco.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

TWO YEARS HAVE ELAPSED, AND THE WAVES  
OF OPINION ROLL ON UNCEASINGLY.

Two years have elapsed. What marvellous vicissitudes among individuals and in society occur in two years. The condition of the nations of the world may be the same in appearance as two years previously—but neither the power of tyrants nor the machinations of priests can arrest the progress of the world. The human mind is growing refined, and tending towards higher aims. Noble intellects are impressed with the importance of their mission, and industriously exert themselves to accelerate the grand result. Agitation and mighty excitement affect human opinions, and their salutary influence penetrates to the most intricate wind-

ings of society. The masses are becoming enlightened by means hitherto unknown, but which now admit of no opposition, however vigorous the arguments of the two contending powers. The explosions, whether partial or general, will be soon followed by triumphs and their attendant defeats. The arms of despotism are employed against people just beginning to awake, or rather, just beginning to realize the desires of past ages. The people are ever progressing, and tyranny trembles in the midst of its armed forces. The throne totters, though defended by millions of men made soldiers by hire or by compulsion. All this had been going on during these two years.

The great sea of human existence, tranquil on the surface, may still seem to be tranquil for years to come ; but the internal commotion of its abyss is making steady progress, and in the beating and boiling of the waters they purify themselves and grow clear.

Two years are past. How many histories of griefs, anxieties, and torments ; of disappointed hopes, of joys, that end in weeping ; of bitter disenchantment, of deeds of evil, of fierce

moral combat between man and man resulting in great evil and little good. Life, that in its hopes looked so charming, is in its realizations most miserable. Two years have passed over the world, over things, and mankind—and two years have passed over the actors in our social and religious drama.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

TWO YEARS HAVE ELAPSED. CONSEQUENCES  
OF A DISEASE OF THE HEART.

TWO years have passed over Francesco, years of indifference to every object in life, of sadness and discontent. What is life, that he should love it?

He had now completed his studies for a year. He shunned no longer the sight of human joys ; he neither desired nor feared them. He sought not the pleasures of society ; they seemed equally incapable of exciting his hate or his love. He entered into company sometimes, and refused not to participate in its amusements ; but when he took part in the games and shared in the joviality of his companions, an air of indifference was observable, as if he neither enjoyed them

nor was annoyed by them. To the exuberant gaiety of his associates he responded with a condescending smile, which resembled that of an automaton, but still was not discourteous. It was an imitation of theirs, like the faint copy of a picture of a master. He no longer cared for study—what was study to him? Nor did he abhor it—wherefore should he? A few hours of this tedious life still might be whiled away in study. Half dozing, stretched upon the sofa, he would read, sometimes with his mind distracted from his subject for pages and pages together, and very often would fall asleep over his book. The vacuum of the mind is the effect of the vacuum of the heart, but the heart can neither fill the void nor trouble itself about the mind.

He went alone for a month or two into the country—not to the spot trodden by the foot of his too-beloved Amalia, now the prize of another. To a remote place he bent his course, far from his acquaintances, to another estate belonging to his family. His parents were discreet enough to allow him to do as he pleased, nor were they over-anxious about the state of his

mind, because neither his countenance, his habits, nor his conversation betrayed grief, and they imagined that his peculiarities were but the fancies and extravagances of his natural disposition. Sometimes a suspicion entered the heart of his mother that her son was suffering from deep-seated grief; but his father laughed at the idea as foolish, when, with trembling voice, she ventured to hint her fears; and Francesco answered carelessly that nothing was the matter, and gave her a kiss when she timidly attempted to interrogate him. Nor did he speak falsely, for he no longer suffered anguish of heart. He had no longer a heart to suffer, or, if he had, it had become totally indifferent to its own sufferings. It had not become hardened, but was reduced to a state of gentle indifference.

He lived for two months, wearied of everything, in perfect solitude, dwelling among mountains and woods. The rushing torrent, with its terrific roar, stirred in him no emotion, and he passed hours in a state of listless apathy, seated upon an acclivity overhanging the dark whirlpool into which the torrent was dashing. Some-

times he toiled to the summit of high mountains with unwearied activity, the thunder rolling beneath his feet, and the valley and plains obscured by clouds which ascended in fantastic forms to envelope the heights themselves in thick and awful darkness.

Sometimes, with adventurous boldness, he would mount the most spirited of his horses, and bound along the edge of the precipice and the narrow mountain pass, risking, and apparently delighted to risk, death at every step. The mountain shepherd regarded the adventurous mortal with looks of wonder, and at eventide mistook him for a spectre.

Sometimes, weary of solitude, he would accept an invitation to join a gay party in the chase, and shine as the boldest in climbing the rocks, in descending the precipices, tracking and facing the wild animals, and in chasing the game by the most precipitous, rugged, and perilous paths. He obtained the reputation of the boldest and most enthusiastic hunter among the daring Alpine rangers. The chase was for him very much a matter of indifference, but still he used it as a distraction.



Sometimes, tired equally of the stillness of solitude and of the excitement of the chase, he returned to the city, and endeavoured, in the bustle of town life, to lose the consciousness of an existence, too evident to him when alone. He refused not to join in society, but returned from his visits exhausted and more depressed than ever. He frequented the *caffès* and conversed with their *habitués*, but words and sentiments fell from his lips as if it were of little moment to him whether he conversed or remained silent. He listened to others with an air of habitual abstraction, not carried, however, to the discourteous extreme of inattention. He visited the theatres like all the Italian youth. People who are in any degree independent and have life in them, frequent the theatre in Italy, and so do gentlewomen of all ranks whose circumstances are easy. He thus employed the evening, because he preferred it to visiting, and it was as good a way as any to kill time. Handsome, rich, of noble presence, with lofty brow and intelligent eye, which acquired fresh interest in its incurious and somewhat attractive glance; graceful in his bearing, with a certain

unconscious robust and even martial air, much increased since tender sentiments no longer softened his heart,—such a man, in the splendour of youth, failed not to attract great attention. Innocent glances were furtively directed towards him by maidens, warmer glances by others, and scrutinizing glances by matrons. Some of the sex wished to be the chosen of his heart; others to possess him as an ornament for their splendid *conversazioni*, and others to win him for their gallant. Meanwhile he glanced around with negligent grace, carelessly noted the finest, and passed on.

He often took his departure in the middle of the performance, without having shown the slightest interest in the actors, or having derived any enjoyment from the music. He would slowly and sadly return to his home, abhorring that which other men desired—the repose from daily cares afforded by sleep. Every day he would change his habits and pursuits; and thus a year passed after the completion of his studies. His existence was truly miserable. The most terrible phenomenon of grief, that of a thorough moral inertia, was manifested in his case. Who

would not prefer to be oppressed by anguish, and give free course to sighs and groans, with the soul conscious of itself and its sufferings, to the misery of him, who, in the unconsciousness of his soul, utters the laugh of madness? The state of grief into which Francesco was plunged was of the latter class, and presented in its characteristics the unconscious inertia of insanity—insanity of heart; though his brain would shine forth in the fullest brightness of intellect.

We appeal not to the scientific, but to the unhappy, to those who experience profound sorrow of heart, whether that incurable desolating malady—derangement of sentiment—may not exist compatible with the full and vigorous action of the mind? And is it not worse, far worse, than the intellectual derangement which is open to the treatment of the art of medicine? Alas, poor Francesco!

## CHAPTER XXX.

TWO YEARS HAVE ELAPSED FOR THE JUST  
AS WELL AS THE UNJUST.

Two years have passed. The state of the house of Alfredini is the same in appearance—it presents the same persons, the same habits, the same ideas, but a vast change has taken place in their souls. The Countess Amalia shines in all the splendour of her youthful beauty. The same purity of feature, the same innocent expression of countenance, the same attractive face, the same lightness of figure, the same grace of contour. The Countess Alfredini is still the Lady Fossombroni, but her brow is more placid and more radiant with pensive sweetness. With her pallor is united that touching expression which renders the daughters of Eve so formid-

able and fatal when their inheritance is grief united to beauty. Her voice is toned to a sweetness by the habitual emotions of a sad impassioned heart, which remains uncorrupted and pure as the beautiful light of the stars. Sentiments of gentleness, charity, and piety diffuse themselves around her, and sweetly impress the minds of those who are participants of their benign influence.

Her tendency to superstition, far from having increased or become grosser, is softened and modified in the fierce combat with internal affliction. In short, her intellect and mental powers have much matured, though rather as the effect of the trials to which her heart has been subjected, than from the lapse of two years only.

Two years have passed, fraught with important results to the mind of the priest. His passion is less furious, but more profound ; it is, perhaps, even less wicked. The influence of Amalia's gentleness seems to have been felt by the priest more than by anyone else. Her uniform benignity has rendered the expression of his all-engrossing love more gentle. The fear of discovery has made him cautious. His convic-

tion of the growing knowledge of the Countess renders him more reserved and less presumptuous. He fears to lose his present advantage, and feels that one false step may risk his removal from her presence—for she is no longer the inexperienced girl of former days. All his arts are employed now to captivate her affection, as formerly they were to make her his victim. His courteous and respectful manners, his low and winning tone, his good sense ever ready to counsel for the best when truth and rectitude clash not with the evil principles which regulate his conduct ; his unrelaxed appearance of religious fervour, employed at first to secure his victim, and now used as an art to hold in captivity that priceless heart ; his seeming tolerance and justice, his manners now so much less excitable, have combined to secure him the confidence, if not the sympathy, of the young and unsuspecting wife. He almost felt reconciled to himself.

Two years have passed. The Count is the same in appearance, but still weaker in health. The same simplicity is manifest, the same devotional spirit involved in the most puerile superstition, the same air of deference towards the

priest, the same admiration for his gentle wife, whom he rather beholds with ecstatic admiration, than loves with tender affection. He is the same man, except that his life is still more on the decline.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED, AND NOT UNEVENTFULLY, FOR THE SECONDARY PERSONAGES OF THE DRAMA.

Two years have passed. The Rector and Vicar-General has fallen from power; the Bishop who promoted him is dead. The Chapter assumed, *ad interim*, the Episcopal authority, and the principal Canon was averse to the Rector, not so much because he detested his arts—a priest never abhors priestly artifice—as because his authority absorbed that of others, and because he always sought to exalt his own adherents and degrade his adversaries among the priests, so that in time his power would have become too consolidated, and other powers must have yielded to it. The power of the Chapter is most im-



posing, and is always adverse to new powers, whether exerted for good or evil. The priests who had been persecuted or depressed by this man, now became influential adherents of the Chapter, and the others were put down and forgotten.

Under these circumstances, the priest of Rivalta found himself, within the control of the Chapter, held in great consideration, while the Chaplain of Alfredini house was treated as an indifferent or inimical person. This state of things continued until the election of a new Bishop, which was effected two years later. He happily was disposed to conform to the wishes of the Chapter, rather than follow the example of his predecessor.

Don Domenico was now at liberty to get rid of the spy fixed upon him by the Rector, and took as chaplain his own *protégé*, who had been ordained priest for some months, and had grown much wiser, more active, and less ascetic, and consequently more of a Christian.

Amidst these changes, the greatest loser was Don Giuseppe, chief satellite of the Rector, and latterly his most intimate counsellor. He fre-

quently absented himself from the Count's house to enrich the Rector with his advice, which, added to the Rector's own cunning, produced a perfect combination of malice and tyranny. The Count and Countess, far from regretting this intimacy, rejoiced in it, falsely imagining that every act of the Chaplain was calculated to redound to the glory of God, and result in the good of mankind. The Count was of this opinion, because the Chaplain told him so; the Countess believed it, because she persuaded herself to do so.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

WHICH FURNISHES INTERESTING MATTER OF  
THOUGHT FOR THE PHILOSOPHER, THE POET,  
AND THE SATIRIST.

WHIT-MONDAY and the two following days form a most important season in the Roman Catholic year. These days are solemn, both for the reason of their consecration, and for the mode in which they are celebrated. They are not ordinary festival days, observed with splendid ceremonies, extraordinary music, clerical pomp, glittering show and glare of torches, illuminating magnificent decorations. They are not properly festival days, because the people do not indulge in dance and revel, nor make merry, and partake of good cheer. The priests alone, on these days indulge their appetites. It is *their*

privilege to eat and be merry on all solemn occasions. These are days of spiritual abstraction, of sadness, reflection, and prayer, devoted to invoking the bounty of the Lord of nature. The priests pray because they are paid to do so. They pray not to invoke for their families the gifts of Providence—for families they have none, and therefore they enjoy the privilege of being exempted from praying for themselves on those days. The people pay, and they pray that Providence would bestow its rich gifts in abundance. These are days of reflection and fervent prayer for others: for fathers of families, for instance, that the season may go on favourably, and they may have no cause to dread the prospect of hunger and scarcity. They implore a suitable measure of heat and rain: they pray for exemption from desolating hail-storms, from the devastations of noxious insects, and from all casualties to their crops; for suitable seasons, with a just proportion of heat, wet, dryness, and wind, and due atmospheric variations, on which so greatly depend the supplies of their families for the whole year. The rich proprietor troubles himself little about the seasons, a scanty yield

causing no distress to his house; but to the lowly agricultural labourer, who waters the ground with the sweat of his brow, it is a matter of no small concern if the ground barely yields a supply adequate to the necessities of himself and those dear to him.

These are the three days of Rogations. The procession extends miles in full along the country, commencing from the neighbouring town. The priests are in motion. The professors and students of the seminary, the priests of the surrounding parishes, and the city priests, some of the canons, and numerous other persons, take a part in it. A great crowd of Levites in priestly or prelatie attire, as the case may be, close the ranks of the laymen—and then follow the women, who are always kept in the back ground ! The priests sing lustily ; the men who are nearest join in chorus ; the rest of them offer prayers for various blessings. A very few tell their beads. The beads are, however, told with incessant murmuring by the women, who repeat *ave marias* without end, one of the oldest or most devout intoning, while the others respond. Each female peasant wears a white handkerchief on her head.

Some of the more devout of the next grade, both town and country women, wear the veil. Altogether the spectacle is very imposing, and to close observers particularly striking from the varied expression of sentiment betrayed. All faces wear a solemn air. The fervour is deep, and the devotion sincere. Every eye seems concentrated in an intense expression of supplication. None but those of the priest and the clerks wander, the scene being one to which they are accustomed. Besides, they pray not for themselves. They own no wife, and will never have descendants who bear their name. It is a matter of business; and every man, clever in his profession, acquires that confidence of manner, that disengaged air in handling his instruments, which are unknown to the unskilled. The priest learns to carry his cross with effect, to confer benedictions, and to raise his voice in every key from the lowest to the highest, in almost the same manner as the ancient priests of Greece and Rome.

The procession moves on its way. Notwithstanding the superstition, the spectacle is grand. The sky forms the roof of the temple—its adorn-

ments are the pictures presented by fresh and new-born vegetation. The incense is the perfume shed by luxuriant nature, permeating the air, and ascending to heaven. Torches are paled by the brilliant light of the sun, which enriches the scene with splendid colouring. From time to time the procession halts on elevated and central spots. The priest turns to the four quarters of the heavens, and solemn hymns, selected from the sacred book, are raised to the God of mercy, entreating for mankind a copious supply of good gifts, not only spiritual, but temporal. The devout people warmly respond. Nature, in her magnificence of vegetation, seems intent upon the solemn scene. This is a moment of enthusiasm for the poet, and the pious soul is deeply moved; in the ecstasy of excitement the spectator sheds a precious tear, and the grateful emotions of an affectionate heart are accepted of heaven as a welcome sacrifice.

The priest, however, is quite unmoved. He is no poet, and his heart is closed to sentiment by his state of isolation. He is not enthusiastic, because he experiences no ennobling affections. He is not pious, because religion is a business

for him ; and those of his tribe who regard it in a different light, are fanatic and superstitious rather than pious.

This great and exciting spectacle is then least felt by the man among them who is ordained, *ex officio*, to utter loud cries ; who, in magical accents, conjures the tempests, the winds and storms ; and invokes all good spirits of earth and air, to ward off every evil influence. He invokes the celestial powers rather than God ; invokes angels and archangels, and virgins and martyrs, and prophets and confessors. These invocations are charms ; and charms, also, are the signs of the cross, made with the hand, or the cross itself by the priest first in dignity amongst the others ; charms are the benedictions, aspersions, genuflections, inclinations, prostrations, and all the acts with which they accompany the ceremony, as it was performed on these three days in the country around the town of Lunaco. Among the spectators, besides the thousands unknown to the reader, are some few with whom he has already made acquaintance.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

MODEL OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND ECCLE-  
SIASTICAL BANQUETS, AND REVIEW OF THE  
GUESTS.

THE procession having accomplished its ordinary route, a change of scene occurs. The people separate, though not to eat and enjoy themselves, until the procession re-assembles to return to the point whence it started in the morning. The priests, too, separate,—but no, they do not separate,—they assemble afresh in a body, and unite themselves more closely than ever, not to continue the sacred devotions, but to participate in the delights of the table. The people may wait in the open air with empty mouths, enjoying serious contemplation, while the priests repose after the burdensome task of

their conjurations, invocations, and marches, laden with their cottas, their stoles, their copes, their crosses, and their torches.

From serving out benedictions the gentlemen pass to carvings of a more congenial and substantial kind. Our being is composed of soul and body, and the former needs sustenance equally with the latter. As the priests are zealous in procuring the one, so are they in securing the other. The people who are enjoying the country air, and have partaken so abundantly of the one kind of sustenance, are compelled to dispense with the other, not for want of due zeal after their long morning walk, but for want of the means of satisfying nature's demands. The priests may show their zeal in its fullest extent, the means furnished them being in proportion to the fervour of their aspirations. If they do not procure their good dinner with money, they obtain it through the providence of their institutions. The Episcopal Court considerably takes cognizance of their fatigues and the necessity of recruiting their strength.

Among the onerous obligations of the priest

of the parish in which the procession stops, disperses, and re-assembles, is that of giving a good dinner to all the priests and canons, ordained ministers, clerks, and servants, and for this purpose a sum is appropriated by the parish. Those, therefore, who remain out of doors to feast upon the air, are they who furnish the priests with the means of regaling themselves plentifully indoors.

The priest upon whom, on the present occasion, devolved the duty of spending the money of the famished parishioners, was the priest of Rivalta. It was not the fault of Don Domenico that the poor people did not all refresh themselves in his house. That was not the rule ; but for his part, he would far rather have obeyed such a rule ; far rather have entertained the people than the priests. His duty, however, obliged him to regale the latter, and he submitted.

The reader is requested to give a glance at a large table extending along the whole length, and nearly occupying the whole breadth of the hall of the Parsonage. It is now completely filled with gentlemen of the cloth, all of large digestive capacity ; and of these individuals, with

the reader's permission, we will give a slight notice, commencing at the topmost rank.

First comes the canon, marked with the small-pox, who has a large nose and thin and spare form. Think not that all the canons are ruddy, robust, and rubicund. The red exhibited by this canon was confined to his stockings. He was a strange man ; a great theologian,—the theologian, indeed, of the chapter,—a great casuist, a great talker, a great bore, and a great eater. Some among the priests eat as much as four ordinary men, and their bodies expand in proportion ; others eat for ten, and seem not half fed. An internal fire consumes their food before it has time to assimilate with the blood and humours, and dilate the skin. This canon was all bile, all sarcasm, all malignity. He quarrelled with the past, present, and future, and with everybody around him. No one could do right, no one was learned, no one was zealous, but himself. This he declared, not openly, but with artful insinuations, which rendered the sense of his strictures the more effective. Indeed, among the many arguments that issued

from his lips, this was the only one which was thoroughly clear and evident.

The people admired him, because they could not understand him ; in fact, he did not himself understand his reasonings. The priests respected him because he confounded them by force of impudence, and because he was a formidable casuist, and always overcame them in argument. He knew little and talked much ; and such talkers have great advantage over those who know much and talk little, or those who know little and talk little, or those who know much and talk well. He was the Corypheus of this holy assembly, its president, and especially honoured as the representative of the chapter.

We felt it our duty to pay him the compliment of consecrating a paragraph to him. The reader may perhaps be wearied, but, even to please the reader, we could not think of sinning against the rules of civility so far as to overlook the president of the feast.

Next in order are the professors of the seminary,—professors of theology, of philosophy, and the schools. In the appearance of one of the

theological professors an infatuated and groveling credulity is strikingly apparent. His soft voice, simple manners, and unaffected and almost maidenly composure, would better become a young girl than a theologian. Another, with lofty look, frank bearing, determined mode of expressing himself, and laical manners, presents the appearance of a learned man of genius, the theologian by profession, the man of the world by inclination.

The aspect of a third is remarkable for the severe,—nay, even savage intolerance of his eye. His haughty speech and arrogant manners mark him as one of the race of inquisitors, whether his severity be exercised in good or bad faith.

About ten of their pupils are present, theological students, who are the exact counterpart of one or other of the professors, according to the particular bent of each.

Two professors of philosophy show all the hauteur and pretension of those who, with a few antiquated forms of the old school in their heads, lay claim to the title of philosophers. They know nothing of those heights and depths of truth to which philosophy ought to tend, and

of false systems they just know the names, without possessing learning enough to confute them. On their forehead is written in legible characters, for the edification of their pupils, "*Swear in verba magistri*," although of *master* they possess little, besides the name and pay. They speak rarely, and in a sententious style, and the emission of their phrases is like the bursting of little air vessels, which produce wind and nothing else.

Then came the pedantic grammarians, lacking ideas and judgment; orators destitute of eloquence or genius, wordy speakers without taste or wit, and altogether void of inspiration. All fill their callings satisfactorily, however. They are well qualified to form good students, according to the notions of ecclesiastical and civil despotism.

If the professors differ materially from the type that we have described, they are dismissed after the first year. They may be gay and licentious, but that is a matter of little moment. It may not be commended, but their faults are leniently overlooked, and their sins hushed up. Anything is preferable to intellect, genius, and a

noble nature. Such gifts would be quite pestilential. They would diffuse the love of country, of science, and of learning in the youthful breast—might even generate heroes—and heroes, under civil and religious despotism, are objects worthy of the gallows, and very often meet their deserts.

Priests and chaplains of every age, condition, and appearance, are here assembled. One is comely, fat, and sleek, and wears an air of epicurean beatitude, which seems to say, "Behold a happy man with a fat benefice, and nothing to do." His chaplain stands near him, a robust young man, born for his calling, with few brains and no learning. He has many vices, but is endowed with good legs, powerful voice, and iron constitution. He runs about from morning to night anointing, shriving, and making out passports for the dying, that they may gain an entrance to heaven.

Here is a simpleton of a curate, who is the laughing-stock of priests as well as laymen, and of girls and women too, though in the good graces of the latter the vain blockhead pretends to have made great advances.



See there the priest of a little parish with a small benefice, clad in rustic attire, with rustic manners. He frequents the markets to buy and sell, to bargain, cheat, and deceive, exactly like the rest of the world. The poor man has as much need to look to his gains as the rest, for he belongs to this world, and has, it is whispered, a family with all the attendant expenses.

The butt of all, however, for his silliness and folly is an old curate, whose deeds of prowess, worthy of Sancho Panza, are the constant theme of discourse, even to his face. Praises and plaudits are bestowed upon him as if he were a hero. He believes himself one in reality, and exults in the title with the utmost self-complacency.

Others present are noticeable for their serious deportment and benignant countenance, and for their dignified and pleasing manners. These are the pious and good, who, notwithstanding that their minds are wide-wandering in error, follow with all their hearts the principles of charity in the unwearied performance of their parish duties, and in their actions are true followers of Christ.

Among Don Domenico's numerous array of guests, thus presenting every variety of character and appearance, two are pre-eminently remarkable. One, like the majority of those present, is clad in the priestly robes ; his countenance is noble and masculine, his limbs vigorous, his hair black, and his eyes most striking and of the deepest jet. His aspect is truly regal, and, judging from his majestic bearing, and from the deference paid to him, it might be supposed that he occupied an exalted rank in the hierarchy. But no, he has no rank whatever. He is simply domestic chaplain. It is Don Giuseppe Lanzini. Those who observe him closely may notice a certain air of indetermination and disquietude, and an affectation of self-possession and freedom. Something extraordinary is apparently occupying his mind ; and no wonder, for at the same table, seated among the many black robes, is a guest in secular attire, a layman among priests, the handsomest and noblest of the Italian youth, and the most unhappy—unhappy, too, through Don Giuseppe's means ; the man, in short, whom Don Giuseppe would least have desired to meet, Francesco Fantoni.

“How improbable that they should thus come together!” will be the exclamation of the superficial observer of human affairs. He may find himself mistaken, however, if he will rightly calculate and appreciate the events of life. To remove every scruple from the mind of the objector, we may perhaps be permitted to reason for a moment on the doctrine of probabilities, and show how this meeting occurred.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## USEFUL LESSON TO WRITERS OF ROMANCE.

NOVELISTS are in the habit of making the succession of events narrated by them, depend upon the most extravagant and incredible combinations. This gives rise to two inconveniences. The one is, that the reader everywhere recognizes the artifices of invention, to the detriment of the interest of the narration ; and the other is, that the facts emanate from no reality of life, and hence lack the impress of truth. Again, the novelist is often at fault in representing the passions in an unnatural manner, which diminishes the value of the delineation, like the monstrous pictures, the productions of mannerism, which are looked upon by posterity as the hallucinations of art. The true student of

human nature, of life, and of man, though he should confine himself within the limits of the strictest probability, may deduce from reality the most extraordinary combinations, which render the unfolding of successive events sufficiently marvellous. If human life be considered in its various phases ; if man be considered in his real sorrows, in his intellectual follies, in his errors, perversities, and misdeeds, as well as in his impulses of inspiration ; if, above all, the mysterious ways of Providence, so diverse from human counsel, be considered ; and if it be observed, how, from trivial circumstances, spring the most surprising events, it will be seen that the reality of life offers vicissitudes which the most daring fancy, in its most immoderate flight, must ever fail to rival. The finger of Providence will be seen in all things ; and, with his face in the dust, man must adore the great contriver. With these considerations in view, we will narrate how this meeting occurred ; and show, that, in common with the rest of the combinations of our drama, there was really no improbability in the case.

The meeting was neither premeditated, nor

contrived in any way by the good priest of Rivalta. It would have been a great error, and indeed he would have considered it a sin, thus to rouse irreconcilable wrath and enmity. Since the funeral of the Marchioness, Don Giuseppe had never again set foot in Don Domenico's house. He had not joined in the procession the last two years; and the priest of Rivalta would have been prepared for any occurrence, however strange, rather than that of seeing him under his roof, and seated at his table. But the mind of Don Giuseppe, like the spirit of evil, was never at rest. A strange thought occurred to him. He determined to be the guest of the parish priest; and why? No reason can be assigned. It was a caprice altogether unaccountable. To look Don Domenico in the face, to intrude himself uninvited at his table, the curiosity to see and hear him—a curiosity which often exists with regard to those a man hates—and still more, a certain feeling of delight at the idea of annoying his enemy by his presence, and, perhaps more than all, an irresistible influence, which, though apparently arising of its own accord in his mind, emanated

from on high—all combined to induce him to join the party: he pondered with more and more earstness on the wish, and at length put it into execution. He determined to be among the guests, if he joined the procession. The dinner, he argued with himself, would not be given him by Don Domenico, but by his benefice, and with the pay which he received for it. Every priest in the procession was at liberty to partake of the dinner, without feeling himself in the condition of a guest, and contracting the slightest obligation. Thus he revolved the matter in his mind, and joined the procession, in which the priest of Rivalta took no part, but for which he waited in his church, little thinking of so strange a visitor.

Don Domenico felt a strong regard for Francesco Fantoni. Since the dissappointment of the latter's affections, the priest had avoided directly introducing the subject in the course of their conversation. Induced, however, by his innate kindness, and urged by motives of Christian charity, he took every opportunity of seeing him, and endeavouring to make him forget his sorrows for a time. Nor was he

unsuccessful. The good ever succeed, more or less, in the endeavours to console the afflicted.

Francesco never made the priest his confidant in the strict sense of the term, for to no one in the world did he feel that he could open his heart. Delicacy, and the natural shyness of grief, forbade his speaking on the subject to the Countess Belfiore. The priest was then the only person whose society Francesco sought and enjoyed, in whose conversation he really found pleasure, and whose friendship he appreciated. His frank manners, kind heart, and even his somewhat uncouth address, pleased and interested him.

For some days Francesco had been at the country-house with his family, and the priest, never dreaming of Don Giuseppe's presenting himself at his house, after what had occurred between them, pressed the former to be one of the party. Francesco, as we have already seen, did not refuse to enter into company. His grief, although profound, was not querulous. Besides, he scarcely felt it right to refuse the request of the good priest. On these occasions



priests are accustomed to invite their friends to meet the clergy, although they take no part in the procession.

Thus it was that Francesco made one of the clerical assemblage, and thus it was that he and Don Giuseppe, for the first time, found themselves seated at the same table. To Francesco it was by no means displeasing to confront and revenge himself upon the man by a look of contempt, unnoticed save by its object. To Don Giuseppe it was most galling to find himself so circumstanced; but he had no one to blame but himself; and he felt that he must now drink the cup prepared by his own hands, however bitter it might prove.

Don Domenico, for his part, felt not at all uncomfortable at this meeting; although, had he been consulted, he would certainly have prevented it. Such not having been the case, he recognized and admired the hand of Providence in it, knowing it to be a mortification for Don Giuseppe.

Such were the conflicting elements composing the company assembled at the house of

the priest of Rivalta, after the procession of Rogations. All were seated at table, occupied in talking and eating. The matters discussed will form the subject of our next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

PRIESTLY ENERGY MANIFESTED IN DEEDS,  
NOT WORDS.

IN consequence of the fatigue of the morning, in crying aloud and walking, and from the natural disposition of the priestly stomach, the assault made upon the soup was conducted in perfect silence. Not with the clamour of the Argivi, but in the profound silence of the Achei was it carried on, if it be lawful to profane clerical zeal by an Homeric comparison. Nor did conversation revive after the removal of the soup. Not only was the silence more general than is usual at banquets in the south, but it was even more profound than among the composed inhabitants of northern climes. Possibly this disposition to silence was diffused by tacit

magnetic sympathy. At all events, the fluid of ill humour oscillated in two eyes, all potent for evil, the eyes of Don Giuseppe, no less than in the pair signalized by the expression of noble disdain in the noble countenance of Francesco.

Poor Don Domenico could scarcely resist a feeling of embarrassment; not from fear of Don Giuseppe, who, having voluntarily introduced himself, was bound to take the consequences; but from a sentiment of hospitality. In his own house, and at his own table, he would have desired that all should be harmony and good humour. In vain he tried to excite to conversation; a sepulchral silence reigned in spite of him. Don Giuseppe most unsuccessfully endeavoured to appear at his ease. Without open provocation, a glance of defiance was continually levelled at him, which seemed the glance of a necromancer. For the first time his bold and terrible glance became timid and uncertain. For the first time his natural firmness seemed to forsake him. The glance of the assassin cowered beneath the severe eye of his judge.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

A STORY COMIC TO THE READER, BUT TRAGIC  
TO THE NARRATOR.

THE Canon at length happily bethought him that it devolved upon him to diffuse over the company the life that was wanting. Malicious and satirical by nature, he tried to incite his spirit to the task of tormenting those about him, rather than that of edifying them with gentle and pious reasoning. The first victim of his wit was the mock-heroic curate, the Sancho Panza of the priesthood.

“ Ah, Don Prosdocimo,” said the purple-clad dignitary, turning as he spoke towards the poor curate, who was the last to finish eating, although first as to the falling to and the des-

patching—" Ah, Don Prosdocimo, how are you getting on ? "

" Very well, monsignore," said the curate, raising his head from his plate, and exhibiting the silliest face possible, expressive of presumptuous stupidity.

" You seem to enjoy this excellent *frittura*, and find it quite to your taste," continued the theologian of the chapter.

" How can I help it, monsignore ? " answered he. " It is so good, it would tempt a dead man back to life."

The clerks could not repress a smile at the sentimental air of the gluttonous curate, and at the emphasis with which he spoke.

" Oh, everybody knows that you are quite a gastronomist," continued the Canon. " Your faculties shine in full vigour in gastronomic operations."

" You are too good, monsignore," answered the clever man, who was quite ignorant of the meaning of the Greek term employed by the Canon, although he must have heard it repeatedly. At his simple rejoinder everybody laughed, and the poor glutton was quite charmed,

believing that he had made an astonishingly clever reply.

"The other day," continued the Canon, "I met with the priest of St. Fulgenzio, who told me that you had left him these two or three months."

"Monsignore, I could not continue with a man who treated me with such disrespect."

"In what way did he treat you with disrespect?" asked the Canon. "It is, indeed, a sad case when a young upstart priest fails in respect to the grey beard of a reverend elder."

"Yes, monsignore, he treated me most disrespectfully," repeated the other. "He made game of me, and ill treated me in every manner."

"Really! It seems quite incredible. Everybody knows what a good man you are, and so moderate and peaceable, that it seems impossible that anybody could think of offending Don Prosdocimo."

"But he did though," exclaimed the curate, turning red in the face.

"May I ask in what manner? Unless you tell me how it was, I never can believe in such an indignity."

“ Why, the *how* is, that he treated me ill, that’s *how*. I don’t know any other *how*; at least, if I know, I don’t choose to say,” replied he, in a fit of the most exaggerated petulance.

“ At all events, you might explain in what manner the priest of St. Fulgenzio offended you, for I shall be glad to take your part, if you have reason on your side,” continued monsignore, tempting him on.

“ Reason on my side !” cried the curate, in a fury, while all the rest were tittering. “ I defy you to find, in all the diocese, another priest who would commit such an action, such treason—yes, such treason,” repeated he, striking the table with so much force as to produce a fearful clatter of the glass and crockery. “ Such treason, I say, as he was guilty of towards me—he who ought to set a good example to others !”

“ Come, just tell us the tale, dear Don Prosdocimo,” insisted monsignore.

“ Well, then,” said the poor man, who began to be quite intoxicated with rage, and still more with the libations in which he had indulged. He drained his glass, wiped his lips, and began the painful story.



“ It was the day before Christmas I intended, as a good Christian, to end the holy fasting of the day with a monstrous good dinner. It was five o'clock, and I saw no preparation of any sort in the kitchen, except a great saucepan full of *baccalà* (salt cod). I could not tell what it meant. I confess that I was surprised, and felt some curiosity to know the reason; but I am not at all inquisitive, as you know very well, gentlemen, and I would not make any remark. The priest was the first to mention the subject. ‘ We are unfortunate,’ said he. ‘ The fish that we expected from Venice is not come, and we must do as well as we can, and content ourselves with *baccalà*.’ I suspected it was an avaricious trick of the priest, but I patiently submitted. The dinner came. I ate and ate nothing but *baccalà*. I can tell you I ate a pretty fair quantity. I was in such a rage, I ate for spite, and I ate till I could hardly eat any more.”

When I had finished, and the priest had hardly touched the *baccalà*, lo, and behold! a beautiful piece of sturgeon came on, and then trout, and then oysters, and then eels, and then, and then—a thousand other things. At first,

I tried to eat heartily : promising at the time which seemed to me the best : as I was sure you will all agree generously."

All cried, - "Yes, much the best," and they were soon sufficed with heartily."

"At first I did not care in much degree : I could eat : but when I was satisfied and could not swallow another mouthful and see the delicious dishes which I could not eat then I went into a passion. Was it not enough gentlemen?"

"Yes, quite, quite," cried all in chorus.

"I took a wine glass—I took care to drink the wine that was in it thoroughly, for I would not, even in anger, waste the good creatures of God, and dashed it against the wall, and then I did begin to talk! I said it was a shameful trick, and that I would not live with a man who would treat me in such a manner. The priest never said a word, but went on eating his dinner quite quietly. The servants came in, and the more furious I was, the more they laughed, the rascals! and, to crown all, some friends called at the very moment, and I should not wonder if he had invited them on purpose, and

they laughed too. I took my hat, and went away. They all came after me to try to pacify me, but it was no use—I was firm as a stone. I bade adieu to the place for ever, and who can blame me? Just tell me, monsignore, whether I could stop in the house with a man who had so grossly affronted me?”

Monsignore, with the air of a judge, answered, amidst general excitement,—

“Certainly, the joke was too bad, but I know that the priest was reprimanded by the Curia, and confessed his error. He exerted himself to get you a good curacy instead of your poor chaplaincy, and thus repaired his folly.”

“Yes, that is true,” said the other, softened by the recollection of the curacy, “and I have nothing more to say about him. I have forgiven him, but I cannot feel reconciled to the man, and shall never forget it.”

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

ANOTHER SHORT BUT SOLEMN STORY FROM  
THE SAME SOLEMN PRIEST.

ON the conclusion of this narration, another guest, to continue the diversion, said,—

“Dear Don Prosdocimo, how many years have you been a preacher?”

Don Prosdocimo was a terrific preacher. He made his hearers laugh and cry in a breath. He acted tragedy and comedy in the pulpit at the same moment. To the guest’s question he proudly answered,—

“I have proclaimed the truth for twenty years, and always with great effect.”

“Did you ever lose yourself when preaching?”

“No, never, except once, and then I reme-

died the matter very cleverly. I was delivering the panegyric of the Madonna del Rosario in the parish church of Castiglione. I had got through the exordium very well ; all were listening open-mouthed ; and I was getting on admirably, when all at once my memory failed me. I could not say a word. I tried to think of something, but I could not get on. I was stammering unconnected words most piteously. Then I assumed an air of inspiration. I was silent for a moment, pretending to listen, and then I exclaimed. ‘ Oh, what a marvellous occurrence ! I feel that words are denied me. I feel that my eloquence fails me. This is a wonder—a miracle,’ I said, with the boldest and most confident air.”

“ Bravo ! bravo !” cried the guests.

“ The Madonna does not wish for the praises of a poor preacher. She likes the prayers of the people : these will be more acceptable to her. I hear her voice speaking to my heart. She wishes for the Rosary said in unison. I cannot contradict her will, nor will you, I am sure ; therefore, with humble and contrite heart, let us say the Rosary. All responded with the

most cordial devotion. The Rosary finished, I descended from the pulpit and walked off in triumph, passing through the midst of the amazed people as a hero."

We should not have felt disposed to degrade our narrative by repeating this trifling discourse, did not the Roman clergy present many such examples of absurdity. However improbable it may seem, any one who has been a Roman Catholic in Italy or elsewhere, will say that he has met with such priests by the hundred. Pass we now to graver matters.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## THE CONVERSATION TAKES A NEW TURN.

WHILE the foregoing conversation was proceeding, three individuals present took but little part in it. Don Domenico was one. The low and insipid trivialities which are so frequent in priestly assemblies, were little to his taste, and, besides, he felt rather anxious as to the result of the meeting between the two foes. Francesco kept aloof from the conversation, because his lofty and generous soul abhorred everything bordering on the low and trivial, and the display of imbecility was to him a source of pain rather than of pleasure. Don Giuseppe paid little heed to what was passing, because his mind was pre-occupied with finding himself in the presence of the man whom he both hated and feared. Yes,

he really feared Francesco in spite of all his efforts to conquer the feeling. The consciousness of his own infamy, and the knowledge of the superiority of Francesco, so depressed his spirits, and so far deprived him of his ordinary courage, that, exert himself as he might, he could not hide his disquiet. He tried to give it the appearance of assurance, but it was in truth shame and self-abasement.

Don Domenico was the first to try to distract the general attention from the disgusting and abject part played by the poor curate, and the cruel and vulgar ridicule thrown on him by the rest, particularly by the canon.

Taking advantage of a brief pause, carelessly, and merely to change the subject, he said to a professor, who was a friend of the deposed rector,—

“Signor professor, are there as many changes in the seminary as in the diocese?”

“Oh no, and I hope never will be,” answered the professor, with a discontented air.

“I do not know why you should hope so,” continued Don Domenico, who was slightly ac-



tuated by the recollection of his own vexations through the ill treatment of the rector.

"I do not know," said he again, "how you can doubt the expediency of the changes made in the diocese, and the necessity for alterations in the seminary."

"Why," answered the other, "I cannot see how either the diocese or the seminary could be better governed than they were."

"They might be," answered Don Domenico, fearlessly, but without failing in discretion, "by standing firm in maintaining just discipline and inculcating morality among the priests, instead of attending chiefly to appearances, and insisting on such trivialities as the wearing of the flowing robe and tricornered hat. Such a mode of government must infallibly produce hypocrites."

"I am not aware that under the former vicar-general the priests were otherwise than holy and blameless in private life," answered the first speaker.

"No one has a right to judge of private actions, and accuse others without proof," said Don Giuseppe, thoughtlessly joining in a conversation which regarded himself personally,

and thus imprudently entering the net. The most prudent man has his moments of blindness, and when excited, men are apt to expose themselves without seeing their danger. Don Giuseppe began to defend himself before any charge had been made against him, and did not perceive that *excusatio non petita fit accusatio manifesta*. Few, however, gave to his words any unfavourable interpretation, except Don Domenico and Francesco. The latter quickly availed himself of the opportunity to commence an assault upon him without the appearance of rudeness.

“Private actions,” said he, with steady voice, and piercing look, “may be justly appreciated by induction, judging from antecedents,” and he laid great stress upon the last word.

Don Giuseppe well knew the hidden meaning his words conveyed, and his heart smote him; but resenting Francesco’s haughty manner, he replied,—

“I do not see how anything can be interpreted to the prejudice of the partizans of the late *régime*.”

“No evils,” returned Francesco, “appeared

openly, it is true, because it was a *régime* of hypocrisy. Hypocrites always take care to keep their true characters hidden," said Francesco, fixing a penetrating glance upon the powerful eye of Don Giuseppe. He, unable to sustain the scrutiny, cast down his head for a moment. Immediately, however, recovering himself, he answered proudly, loftily raising his brow, "The world often looks upon those as hypocrites, who, in the sight of God, are sincere."

"The world," said Francesco, "may be deceived, but such is seldom the case. I believe, for example, that I am not deceived in this instance."

"You maintain, then, that the partizans of the old *régime* were all hypocrites," said Don Giuseppe.

"I say that it was the hypocrites who ruled," said Francesco, firmly.

"But you must be aware, sir, that at this table are many who were its partizans," said the priest, foolishly. When excited by passion he lost his instinctive prudence, as we have had occasion to see before.

"You know," answered Francesco, "that a

general maxim is no offence to an individual, unless his conscience pricks him, and in that case he is his own accuser. I know not whether any of these gentlemen were of the Rector's party, but if they were, they will not consider themselves censured, because, false as the system was, they no doubt followed it in good faith;" so saying, he turned towards the others and away from Don Giuseppe, so that it was evident he accused the chaplain of hypocrisy. The professor who had been first addressed, remarked—

"I belong to the Rector's party. I may have been deceived, but I am conscious of having acted in good faith, and cannot feel myself offended by your observations."

"I, too, belonged to the Rector's party," exclaimed Don Giuseppe; "and I consider myself personally insulted."

"But why, my dear sir, consider yourself offended?" said Francesco, with an indefinable kind of smile, which appeared ingenuous to the others, but seemed cruelly significant to the eye of Don Giuseppe. It seemed to say, "You have reason to be offended, and we know your reason

too." "I can," continued he, "demonstrate from experience that under that *régime* hypocrites triumphed."

These were words of fire for Don Giuseppe, embracing volumes of meaning; but he dared not appear to understand them, lest he should confirm the unfavourable impression they were calculated to make. Francesco, to cover his attacks from the eyes of the rest, continued —

"I can demonstrate it from my own observation." From prudence he avoided repeating the word experience. "My observations date from the time when I was in the seminary." Don Giuseppe felt somewhat relieved. He had feared something worse, when his adversary began to speak of his experience. "In fact," pursued Francesco, "the education of the seminary in my time was eminently calculated to make the poor youths hypocrites. This may not have been the case previously, but it was so most certainly at the period of the introduction of the new dignitary. Our seminary had varied somewhat, I believe, from others in Italy, but he reduced it to the same state as the rest."

“Well, did he not act consistently?” angrily asked Don Giuseppe.

“Yes, consistently as far as his own object was concerned, that of making hypocrites,” answered Francesco, boldly.

“There the youths were governed by violence, and threatened with the most severe and cruel punishment. The prefects were inexorable censors.\* They cruelly regulated every act and word, and sought to investigate every thought. They harshly reproved for the simplest fault, and endeavoured to repress the most harmless and innocent pastimes. Every lively emotion was discouraged by them in every place, on every occasion, and under all circumstances. During the hours of study, woe to him who ventured to raise his eye from his book. In church, during the long hours of prayer, the slightest distraction was noted. A wandering look, a change of posture, was marked and punished. The hours which should have been

\* The prefects are some of the eldest students, who watch the different classes after the hours of study. Each class, from the lowest to the highest, has a prefect at its head.

given to recreation were embittered by a domineering eye, ever fixed in hostile guise upon the pupils. What was the effect of it all?" he asked, having drawn this picture of the condition of the poor lads, and alluded so pointedly to Don Giuseppe, who was known to have been a prefect at the time in question. He intentionally prolonged his strictures, with a view to shame the man by the recollection of his cruelties. "Those," continued he, "who ventured to think for themselves, those of a lively turn of mind and independent spirit, learned to hate a religion so tyrannical and burdensome, and, as a consequence, learned to hate the gospel. Others, of weaker intellect, yielded themselves slaves to bigotry and the most miserable religious melancholy. Another class, far worse, impure of heart, set up for models of sanctity, and became perfect hypocrites, like the greater part of the superiors and prefects."

This bold and pungent accusation was strictly true and most applicable to Don Giuseppe. The company looked at each other, and knew not what to say. Some approved, others disapproved, of his sentiments, but all held their

tongues except Don Giuseppe. He felt his blood boil with rage, and he turned pale, knowing that these reproaches were aimed at him, and that he, above all the prefects, was identified with the system which Francesco decried. Gladly would he have reduced him to nothing by a glance, but this satisfaction being denied him, he was determined to be revenged in some way for the affront. His only weapons at present, however, were words; he therefore remarked with a Satanic malignant sneer—

“I suppose that he who paints this picture with such vivid colouring, will hold the first rank among the victims of this false system of education.”

The answer was most cutting and provocative, and Francesco felt it as the more bitter, because it re-opened wounds inflicted by Don Giuseppe himself. He shrunk not, however, from replying. At first he did not speak, but burst into a laugh—a terrific laugh—not the emanation of hilarity, but of profound contempt—a laugh loud, broken, and unnatural—a laugh speaking taunt, defiance, and mockery, and



seemingly capable of reducing its object to utter insignificance—a laugh which froze the life-blood in Don Giuseppe's heart. The noble face of Francesco quickly regained its dignified composure. With a solemn and lofty expression of countenance, and an eye sparkling with indignation, he replied in a loud, clear, and impressive voice—

“Don Giuseppe Lanzini, your observation recalls to my mind that I was once accused of the charge that you would insinuate against me. The accusation at that time reduced me to despair. At that time I should have preferred finding myself in the hands of the Inquisition, and sentenced to undergo the last extremity of torture. Now your accusation is a matter of perfect indifference to me, and excites in me only a laugh of derision. That is your answer, Don Giuseppe Lanzini.”

It would be impossible to describe the tumult occasioned in Don Giuseppe's mind by Francesco's observations, so evidently applicable exclusively to him. In the conclusion, especially, he saw himself exposed, and all his heinous conduct laid bare. His fear exceeded his indigna-

tion—so terrible were the language and manner in which his dark schemes were revealed. He shrunk within himself, and would gladly have coiled himself up like a serpent to escape the formidable look of Francesco, whose eye, as he spoke, was fixed intensely upon him, so that he felt himself conquered and trampled in the dust.

It is the first time he has felt completely humiliated in the eyes of others, and he makes mortal efforts to conceal his humiliation and maintain his dignity ; but if the others observed not his downfall, Don Domenico perceived it, and rejoiced in it. Francesco triumphed in the effect he had produced, and aggravated his humiliation by a glance of dignified indifference and a very slight smile, which might be interpreted as significant either of compassion or contempt. He turned to others and conversed tranquilly, agreeably, and courteously. From a natural tendency to acknowledge a talented and generous man, all manifested respectful deference for him, and being so favourably disposed towards him, did not observe anything contrary to religion in his remarks. Don Giuseppe remained taciturn,

gloomy, and humbled, unsupported and undefended even by the party of the late Rector.

The dinner over, Francesco departed. The priestly company reassembled their dispersed flock, and set off in procession on their return to the town.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

CHOICE GROUP—SENTIMENTAL MEETING—  
SWEET ADIEU.

THE procession returned in the order in which it set out. The day was most delightful. The gentry inhabiting the surrounding mansions met together to enjoy the pure air of the country and see the procession, which is always an object of interest and curiosity. Being found so attractive, ceremonies of this kind are very numerous. Rome loves to divert her followers with public spectacles.

Count Alfredini and his wife were among the spectators. The Countess Belfiore had met them accidentally. She was accompanied by her two youngest daughters, the eldest being absent on a visit. The two families joined

company with several other ladies and gentlemen. The Countess Amalia had no idea that Francesco was in the neighbourhood. Had she been aware of it, she would have excused herself from going out.

All eyes were intent upon the procession which was passing. Francesco, by chance, wandered near the spot, almost unconsciously, urged by slight curiosity to be a spectator. His mind was occupied in recalling the scene of the dinner-table. He had excused himself to Don Domenico, fearing he had gone a little too far; but the priest had assured him that he was in no way offended, and that, on the contrary, he was rather pleased than otherwise at the occurrence, for he was always desirous that truth should prevail within his walls.

Francesco, thus thinking while wandering among the knots of people, found himself, before he was aware, near the group composed of the Count's party. He did not observe Amalia, but only the Countess's daughters, the youngest of whom, by an exclamation addressed to her mother, announced to all the presence of their friend.

Poor Amalia scarcely knew where she was. An involuntary tremor seized her, and her heart beat violently. She did not turn nor move, except to place her arm in that of the Countess, as if asking strength and support. Her friend felt her tremble, and before turning round, murmured in her ear, "Courage, my Amalia, courage;" and Amalia soon found courage, not from others, but from herself and her own innocence.

The Count knew nothing of what had passed between Francesco and Amalia, and was not aware that they had met since her return from the convent. Don Giuseppe had never made any allusion to the past in his presence, nor had mentioned Francesco either favourably or unfavourably, for nothing had ever occurred to lead to the introduction of his name. The Count, on hearing the name of Signor Francesco Fantoni pronounced so joyfully by the children, turned round, and saw him. They were seminary acquaintances, and he had ever highly paid Francesco the tribute that simple and unenvious insufficiency feels to be owing to talent. He could respect in others the qualities

in which he himself was wanting. His own were qualities of the heart and natural disposition. He therefore approached the new-comer, and said, in soft and gentlemanly accents,

“My dear, Signor Francesco, I am very glad to see you, and shall be delighted to present you to my wife, who is an old acquaintance of yours. You will hardly know her, she is so much improved since you saw her.”

Thus saying, he took him by the arm, with his gentle and almost childish manner, but which was pleasing from its simplicity, and led him towards his lady, who pretended to be engrossed in watching the procession. Francesco exerted his utmost strength and presence of mind in this emergency. His heart beat, and his knees trembled, as if he were afraid. His face too, turned pale, as if from fear; and in truth, he was frightened for a moment. By a great effort he composed himself, or rather composed his countenance, to an appearance of calmness, and confined the tempest within his breast. Notwithstanding his internal commotion, his mouth framed a melancholy but pleasing smile. On approaching his wife, the Count said,

“See, my dear Amalia, here is one of your old friends come to renew his acquaintance with you.”

Poor Amalia turned with a simulated smile the most interesting—simulation was for the first time interesting in a woman’s face—and remarked, with a voice somewhat tremulous, though still confident, virtue rendering her strong,—“It is always a pleasure to meet an old friend.”

She raised her eyes with a tolerably placid look, though some emotion was visible. Their slight humidity was not remarked save by Francesco, who so well read every phase of their expression. He saw at a glance the state of her heart. He read it on her brow, which the calm of melancholy had rendered less radiant but more beautiful ; he saw it in her lips, still roseate, but not with their former splendid coral. He perceived it in the more delicate contour of her face, still pure and maidenly, but not so fresh. To him was visible, in the interesting pallor of her lovely countenance, all that had passed within her during these two years. He read the exciting history of struggles between virtue and feeling—the passion exalting the virtue, the



virtue purifying the passion. He read the painfully interesting story in the changed character of that sad and pensive beauty, and appreciated the change at its full value, and rejoiced in it. Yes, it made him feel happy. His heart softened, and in an instant changed from proud desperation to a state of tranquil beatitude and chastened holy love, which might sinlessly be cherished towards an angel.

In a moment's glance in his countenance, she read, with the instinctive acuteness of sentiment, an Iliad of suffering. In those rigid features and that compressed lip, scarcely exciting a remark in others, she saw the signs of moral endurance. In that eye, so full of secret and despairing meaning, she read the expression of chastened grief, which it now assumed for the first time. At a glance she read a moving tale of anguish and desperation—and felt her heart heave with unutterable compassion rather than with love. He had the gratification of feeling that he inspired her with courage by exemplifying it in his own conduct.

With a sad yet tranquil smile, he said, "I am, indeed, glad, Lady Amalia,"—he avoided

saying 'Countess,' not from rudeness, but to spare her a reproach—"to renew our acquaintance. I trust I am no less worthy than formerly of your friendship, and believe me, I shall ever do my utmost to merit it."

She well understood the import of those words, and the promise they conveyed of fidelity, pardon, and confidence. She ventured to extend her hand and offered it to him, no longer trembling, but with heroic firmness, and with an expression of open regard—but such regard as the purest spirit might cherish unblushingly, replied, firmly, "I feel myself happy, Signor Fantoni, not only in having been, but in still being your friend."

To those present, these remarks seemed but the compliments of courtesy, and they extolled the high breeding manifested in the lady-like manners of the Countess. The Countess Belfiore interpreted them in their true sense, and admired Amalia's self-possession. Francesco perfectly understood her, and experienced a feeling of ineffable delight, combined with respect for her, almost amounting to adoration. He secretly vowed to render himself worthy of her interest by a complete change of life.

Who could reprove this holy communing of sentiment between the Countess Alfredini and Francesco Fantoni? Her virtue was strengthened by it, and his heart was made better. A sudden change was operated in his mind, and every noble sentiment awoke that had slept there for two long years.

The Count said, "I hope, Signor Fantoni, your will favour us with you company sometimes. It will afford me great pleasure if you will dine with us to-morrow."

Francesco answered unhesitatingly,

"I thank you most sincerely, Count. I cannot express how happy I should be to accept your invitation, but important duty calls me away. I quit this place without fail, this evening, to commence a journey, which will keep me absent many months, perhaps a year or two."

The Countess immediately guessed the nature of the important duty, and the necessity which compelled him to set out on so long a journey. A tear started to her eye—but was soon, with laudable care, decorously and dexterously hidden. It was unnoticed by all, save by the quick eye of

love. He took leave of her with dignified emotion. Others saw the dignity, but not the emotion; she saw the emotion, and appreciated the dignity which covered it. He took the hand of each one present, and hers too. Perhaps he held hers longer than the rest. She, perhaps, bestowed upon his a warmer pressure than she would have done upon that of another.

Reader, condemn them not. With her it was an adieu before his long journey; it was a mark of satisfaction, and token of confidence, in his honourable and virtuous conduct for the future. It was, perhaps, intended as a sign of unchanging, but not the less innocent affection. Reader, if thou condemnest them, thou hast certainly no heart!

At the moment that Francesco was taking leave, the group of priests passed, and among them Don Giuseppe, whose eye emitted a glance of fire as it rested on Francesco and Amalia, at the instant their hands met.

Francesco departed, feeling his heart greatly consoled. Amalia's conscience was free from reproach. She took leave of her friends, and

greatest in sadness. Poetry is the fire which agitates and warms the breast of man, and aids him to traverse the spheres, and range the boundless space of the firmament, almost transmuting his nature to that of the pure intelligences—while he, as the apostle of heaven, is rapt in lofty flights of imagination. Nor can he ever attain those noble altitudes uninspired by grief. No sentiment untinged by sadness, seems truly inspired or great. God himself has consecrated grief in his own Word, which is full of the most majestic and saddest complainings. In suffering, the enlightened are manifested as the sons of God, and illuminated by Him.

Whence does Music draw her enchantment? From the plaintive. While sounds, regulated to form the most exquisite harmonies, exhibit all the grades of suffering through which man can pass; or rather, while they generalize the moral conditions of minds groaning under affliction—then Music may boast of being the child of genius. Now, with sounds sad and slow, she represents melancholy, which is the habitual mood of the human mind under the strongest sense of beauty and sublimity. Now with soft and sadly

delicate tones, she paints the tender anxieties and troubled fancies of love. Again, by an exciting combination of loud and stirring chords, she depicts the horrors of battle, and the fire of martial valour. Music is a medium of expression for all the varied conditions of the human soul in its æsthetic conceptions, excluding alone individualism :—and she finds her loftiest and most wonder - striking inspirations in grief.

Painting derives its greatest lustre and sublimity from its representations of grief. This is eminently exemplified in the works of the masters, where art and feeling combined, have accomplished marvels. The *chefs-d'œuvre* of the greatest painters are all derived from one idea—in the manifestation of the conception of sorrow. The greatest artists have drawn their subjects from religion, blending, it is true, the pure with the superstitious, and in depicting them they have accomplished wonders of art, by carrying out their conceptions of profound grief and placid melancholy.

Even love itself, the sweetest of human passions, finds in melancholy its element, its very

essence. Amid the festive dance and joyous turning, loving glances may meet, expressing the strong emotion of the soul; heart may warmly respond to heart in mutual sympathy. But this charming and delightful sentiment which sweetly agitates the chaste bosom—the innocent response of two loving hearts, produces sensations far removed from gaiety. The glance that emanates from the eye of love, is it conceived in the intoxication of joy? Oh, no! The holy emotion of hearts that love, is tinged with profound melancholy. From joy, love takes flight. Love is sad and pensive, even amid the purest delights arising from the union of two hearts. The sweet breathings of love, its glowing language, its smiles, its disjointed phrases, its gentle dewy tear, its sighs, its subdued murmurs,—all its enchantment, all its charm, consist in the veil of melancholy which covers it, the tint of grief which saddens it so tenderly. Hence the lovers' predilection for woods, and shades, and valleys, and even the desert, in preference to the sun and plains, and showy gardens and open country. The melancholy impression produced by the former, better

accords with the chastened tone of enamoured hearts.

Beauty reaches not the sublimity of perfection, until a tinge of sadness is diffused over the loving face. The look which glances in sweet melancholy, the delicate cheek suffused with the lightest shade of pallor, the mouth so winning while uttering its saddened accents, the rare and melancholy smile of ineffable suavity, the person abandoned to interesting self-forgetfulness, as though care wholly occupied the tender bosom ; replace the former unheeding vivacity—and beauty thus acquires its perfection.

Such are the most alluring beauties. Such were those which have been most fatal to the world, and have excited the strongest and most overwhelming passion. These are they who have inspired the verses of the most sublime poets of the world.



## CHAPTER XLI.

WOMAN BECOMES ANGELIC WHEN, TO THE  
CONFUSION OF THE TEMPTER, SHE EMPLOYS  
HER INFLUENCE FOR THE REGENERATION OF  
MAN'S MIND.

THUS it was that Amalia appeared to Francesco so surpassingly beautiful—far more so than when the graces of youth embellished her girlish face. Her touching beauty was his own production, the effect of the sentiment he had aroused, or rather renewed in her virgin breast.

He saw that grief, without rendering the lineaments of her noble and pure maidenly countenance in the slightest degree more severe, had rendered it, while less dazzling, far more delicate and interesting. Hers was a reflective, romantic kind of beauty, mysteriously suggestive,

and at the same time quietly significant—a beauty in perfect harmony with her heart, which had suffered, and from suffering, had extracted treasures of wisdom, virtue, strength, and all that is most sublime in the heart of woman ; which in truth possesses more of the elements of heroism than that of man !

Francesco's eye was enraptured, his heart swam with ineffable joy ; a delight never before experienced by man, seemed to course through his veins. In that look he read sentiments of charity, love, virtue, and strength, and felt happy—happy as man can be—so happy, that could Don Giuseppe have looked within him, he would still more vehemently have cursed the work of his hands, and more ardently desired to breathe upon it the breath of destruction. He would have felt tempted to slay the Count, that by casting Amalia into the arms of Francesco, his present felicity might lose its intensity, and its zest be destroyed by possession. But he did not know it. Amalia knew it, however. She noticed the ray of consolation, which, though rapid, beamed vividly in his face on seeing her, and hearing her voice. Though they spoke

not of sentiment, how many communications passed between their hearts! How could the language of their souls be hidden from each other, when both could so clearly read the mind of each with all its secrets, and derive comfort, as if reading in the book of life?

She understood and felt all, and, in one sentence, told him all that she had learned and felt. Hers were words of holiness, regenerating and renewing his spirit. They were words of consolation, salvation, and virtue—and their effect was such, as in pronouncing them, she had implored of God it might be. The words, which to others sounded merely like the expression of womanly gentleness—the words uttered in the presence of so many witnesses, and whose meaning was hidden from all, had for him a peculiar appreciable meaning—"I feel myself happy, Signor Francesco, not only in having been, but in still being, your friend," pronounced by a holy woman! Could a more delicate and unequivocal assurance of unchanging affection be uttered? of affection as constant as it was pure and innocent—such affection as a guardian angel might experience towards the soul committed to

his care ; the affection of two incorporeal existences united together in a spiritual bond to do homage to their Creator.

Her charming expressions sufficed to renew his nature, to make him again a man among men. He was no longer the strange and wandering spirit he had been for two years, like one who had come from the regions of death to trouble the living with his presence. Her answer seemed to open once more a path before his eyes, although not a path of hope as far as this world was concerned. Were Amalia to be free, she could never be his now. He no longer wished to call his the woman he had loved, but who was now another's. She herself, with her piety of soul, could not wish it. But her regard sufficed to open for him the path of action and of virtue ; it led him to love his fellow-men, and labour energetically for their good to the full extent of his powers, which were of no mean order.

The proud and noble man is very often moved to reflection by the weak and gentle being by whom he permits himself so readily to be swayed either for good or evil. Adam, the most per-

fect of the human race, allowed himself to be tempted to evil by woman. Francesco, one of the noblest young men of our days—degenerate son of Adam that he was, yet among the least corrupt—received the first impulse of grace after his aberration, not of mind, but of heart, through the influence of a woman—through Amalia.

From that day he was a new man. His intelligent mind was thus led to serious reasoning, and lofty aims. He had a generous and expansive heart, which was softened by love, and, therefore, in great measure, free from ambition and pride, the peculiar vices of one who has never suffered, but always known prosperity. All his affection he now strove to turn to the benefit of his country and countrymen. He possessed an indomitable will, and he determined at once to enter upon a great and perilous undertaking connected with the liberation of his unhappy country from the dominion of tyrants.

On the close of the memorable day of the procession, Amalia experienced no remorse for anything she had said or done. She had ceased to be the fearful girl of former days. Though still superstitious, her superstition was no longer

puerile. She was guided by a moderation, suggested by her own greatness of mind and the experience she had acquired from her severe trials.

She no longer feared Don Giuseppe, but respected him, looking on him as a devoted friend—at least, as such she always tried to consider him, though it is true she found it impossible to check a feeling of repugnance towards him. So changed she was, that, though Don Giuseppe loved her more and more, he now feared her too. What bitterness did it cost him to find that he could not control her will, as formerly. This was the blackest day in his existence—darker even than the day when he was the spectator of the kiss between the happy lovers, when, after mass, he saw them from the window.

We will not repeat scenes of desperation. His sentiment, though more concentrated by the force of age and habit, raged no less violently, and no wonder he should be excited on that day. He, however, felt it necessary to be quiet for a time, and wait his opportunity to wreak his vengeance both upon Amalia and Francesco.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## REFLECTIONS AND PLANS.

FRANCESCO was at Venice, not yet determined upon the course of action he should pursue in this recommencement of life. Great things he was determined to accomplish, but he knew not how to begin, nor in what way really to advance the interests of his native land and fellow-countrymen. In his noble mind and sensitive feelings, this was a most difficult problem. He cast his eye over unhappy Italy, and felt almost discouraged. He saw native oppressors with their troops of rapacious hirelings, whether of the clerical order or of the magistrature, attired in toga or bearing the sword, and devoted to the government from principle and persuasion, or from cunning, perversity, and rapacity, who ill-

treated and oppressed in every way the unfortunate beings under their power. He saw the poor half-famished, brutified, and superstitious applaud their enslavers ; to the crowned monsters, clad in armour, red with the life-blood of their countrymen, they paid homage as to demigods. Trembling with indignation, he saw many shaking their chains with no other effect than to aggravate the pressure on their bleeding limbs. He saw those, who, being abased by this very state of things, shew themselves perfectly careless about the fate of their unhappy country. They felt not affection for her enslavers, it is true, but, indifferent and unreflecting, they gave themselves up to an easy, joyous life, without care or thought. Of theatres, dances, and diversions of every description they were the promoters, occupying themselves with their Phrynes and Messalinas : these were the most precious ministers of tyranny. Their example and insinuation perverted and poisoned minds by encouraging to habitual dissipation. They obtained numerous followers, and often the most generous minds were thus perverted.

Again, he saw the deceptive influence of a



an ostentatious display,  
 taught by the Holy Gospel—  
 of human conditions as  
 taught by the Man God—  
 at the poorest man in the world  
 are brethren. He saw that,  
 that Book in their hands, the  
 their foul conduct were not only the  
 upholders of tyranny—whose na-  
 ture is corruption and immorality—  
 themselves presented in their dealings  
 as the most striking models of despotism,  
 to a deep-rooted system, still more by  
 odious tenets of the crafty hierarchy than  
 any other evil influence of those who did  
 wrong to their own order. He saw thought-  
 less youth unmindful of the poison it was drink-  
 ing thanks to the device of despots, whose  
 method of seduction was to involve inexperienced  
 youths in the sea of pleasure and dissipation.  
 These victims thought of nothing but diversion ;  
 and, for the love of country, and in the exercise  
 of noble affections, their breast thenceforward  
 ceased to beat. He saw women glancing around  
 with wanton eye, thinking not of country, nor

sympathizing with generous hearts ; others, knowing nothing of holy and noble patriotism, but yielding themselves up to the bigotry inculcated by the Vatican, which always strives to ensnare the female mind. The priesthood govern by the influence of women, over whom they exercise unlimited control, and often not in a spiritual sense only. He saw the women then, instead of inciting young men to noble sentiments, acting as the abettors of tyrants, either from laxity of morals or from bigotry. He saw, in States subject to foreign powers, the same tyranny as civil government was concerned, though exercised less capriciously, and with less ostentation of cruelty and barbarity—but with effects no less fatal, and, perchance, still worse, for they were more systematic. He saw the beloved land which for ages proudly laid claim to glory—the first among the nations—now trodden under foot, the sport of the Stranger, insulted by the odious northern soldier. He saw some among his countrymen resist, but a greater number submit to their conquerors, yea, some, even, with a smiling countenance, showing the abject humility of slaves, though

they hated their chains; while many even uttered plaudits! But what could those who resisted effect? For them were in readiness persecution and dungeons, for them the scourge and fetters, and, near at hand, the scaffold.

All this Francesco saw as the condition of his unhappy country, and how could he rescue her? Had those succeeded in freeing her, who, in years bygone, had risen in revolt at the price of betrayal, trial, and execution? Had the inflammatory poems of her bards delivered her?—of her bards, who, in exile, sang the song of desolation, and raised the cry, “To the rescue?” The conspiracies, which for years had been forming, had accumulated victims—but had they redeemed her? No. And what was the cause of these repeated failures? asked he of himself. Could it be that virtue and valour had fled from Italian breasts? No, it could not be so. Take a turn through the streets of our cities, thought he. The noble countenances, the lofty bearing, the robust limbs, combining elegance with vigour, of thousands of the sons of Italy, show that generous spirit and physical force are not yet lacking in her youth. All that is re-

quired for securing liberty is, that the nation be mature. Can conspiracies effect their end?—When did a conspiracy ever succeed? The idea is an illusion ; let not liberty be sought for in that source. Shall we look to foreign help to sustain us in our revolt? Thrice foolish he who depends upon the stranger, after the experience of past ages. The foreigner is the natural enemy of Italy. He envies her beautiful sky, covets the treasures of her produce, and strives to secure them for himself. He lifts his eye boldly to drink in the pure light of her sun, while he, whose right it is by inheritance, is kept grovelling on the earth, in the abject and opprobrious servitude of slavery.

Francesco saw that liberty was never obtained, or, if obtained, was never secured, unless the people were strong in moral integrity. A people may experience a sudden impulse of enthusiasm, and accomplish great things under the influence of excitement ; but to what purpose is it, unless they are virtuous? Lacking virtue, the most powerful inspirations, the warmest enthusiasm, are quenched and destroyed. If a people be not virtuous, they are never powerful, and innu-

merable elements combine to oppose their regeneration. Revolutions are premature so long as moral regeneration is incomplete. The agitators themselves are often men devoid of faith or principle, — ambitious, miserable deceivers, whose sole aim in becoming demagogues is to exalt themselves and obtain unmerited consideration. The modest and virtuous are generally unknown under a despotic government, or among a people who may nourish aspirations after liberty, but who are vicious. They either escape observation, or are crushed by intriguers, and remain hidden in obscurity, deploring the bloodshed and the impoverishment of families, to remain under the tyranny of these agitators, who, oftentimes loaded with spoils, abandon their country, lacerated and bleeding, or sell it to tyrants, in imitation of the treachery of Judas.

Would this be the state of Italy if she were to attempt a rising now? Possibly not, although it might be the case with any people not barbarous, and subjected to despotism, as the result of a decrepit civilization; and hence it was possible that such might be the result now. But virtue

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has never been extinct in Italy, and certainly was not at the period that Francesco made these reflections. The memory of her past glory was still sufficiently vivid to excite the warmest emotions in the breasts of many. Adulation to tyrants and their followers was not offered by all of them. Some, indeed many, lived solitary, scornfully despising all base subjection, undaunted and free in heart and thought, and perhaps enlarging their minds by study. Numbers of Italy's children, too, in spite of tyranny, possessed energetic will, ardent courage, and heroic determination. The cloudless sky, the rich soil, and departed glories, served to inspire their breasts; and the fervid sun warmed the poetic feeling, natural to their race and the place of their birth. In spite of the worst efforts of tyrants, Italy has always had her bards, her politicians, her warriors, and her Brutuses, ready to renew former struggles, whenever circumstances should appear favourable. Italy, under her most deplorable humiliations, has ever boasted as large a number of great men as the freest nation in the full and actual fruition of liberty can show—and this thought encouraged Francesco.

It is now time, so reasoned Francesco to himself, that every true son of Italy should exert himself for the good of his country, by aiding, as far as possible, in her moral reformation. Could her youth be educated to virtue, Italy would be free. This is the task to be accomplished, and the source whence her liberation may be looked for sooner than from conspiracies. The most potent conspiracy against tyranny is that of rendering the people virtuous. Tyranny finds its support in corruption. Under the empire of tyranny no efforts are spared to emasculate the minds of the young, and occupy the people in the pursuit of pleasure. We ought, therefore, to endeavour to counteract these influences by leading their minds forward to the full conception of the true and good. The corrupt influence of rulers enervates their minds and destroys all vigour, both physical and mental. It is our duty, then, as apostles of liberty, to recall them to purer sentiments.

We ought further to think of the religious education of the people, and exert ourselves to render the sons of Italy true Christians, instead of worshippers of Anti-Christ, under the title of

Christ's Vicar. Instead of infidels, let us try to make them faithful followers of that which is good. To do this, that religion must be abolished which works so many abominations. Tyrants sustain it because it sustains them. Tyranny favours corruptions, dissolute conduct, rapine, and disorders, and by its means every outrage is perpetrated against the holy rights.

But he reflected, pursuing the bold course of his thoughts, the Romish religion is really the supporter of tyranny, and hence the abettor of all her abominations. She authorizes its infamous acts both by word and deed, and clearly, therefore, cannot be the religion from on high, given by God, made flesh to redeem us. Such an ungodly religion must be extirpated from Italy, and instead must be planted the Gospel in its purity. Then, and not till then, the people will become virtuous, and virtue will effect the downfall of tyranny. Therefore he concluded, according to the principle that every sincere and ardent patriot must be a virtuous man, he ought not to occupy himself in conspiracies, but in propagating the seeds of virtue and the principles of Christianity, in op-



position to those of Papacy. Francesco, not from motives of vanity, for these had little weight with him, but feeling that God often avails himself of humble means to attain great ends, acknowledged an internal conviction that he was called for this purpose. He felt within himself the mission from on high, and refused not the office.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

THE GREATEST CONCEPTIONS ARE THE SIMPLEST  
AND EASIEST OF EXECUTION.

IN accordance with the plan of action Francesco had laid down for himself, he sought out many youths, approached them with graceful and winning smile, and, conversing amiably with them, won their esteem, and made himself dear to them. Nor did he neglect the students belonging to poor families. In Italy, those of humble station in life oftentimes procure for their sons the benefits of study, and even contrive to give them an university education.

There is no greater attraction for youths than to see men in the vigour of age, and with growing reputation, interest themselves about

them, and seek and appreciate their company. Great good would accrue to the rising generation, if men versed in books would lay aside the disdainful dictatorial gravity of the schools, and comport themselves with condescending familiarity towards the young—if they would instruct and animate them. The ground would ever become better and better adapted to receive the good seed. Yes, this is one of the secrets of the reform and progress of nations—the benignity and condescension of the learned towards the youthful. But too often the man possessed of knowledge and learning is proud and inaccessible, and despises all as beneath him. Making an idol of himself and his own talent, he becomes from ambition spoiled and perverted.

He holds in contempt the productions of others, desiring that the world should occupy itself exclusively with his own. This being the case so generally with authors and men of learning, we should be almost inclined to hate science; but we know that it is not necessarily so, and the defect is not in science, but in men who adulterate the purest things.

Inadequate to the end as the means may appear, incalculable were the benefits conferred by Francesco upon the Italian youth by his generous and noble plan. He confided his sentiments to friends not less devoted than himself to the cause. By them his plans were highly appreciated and his example followed, not only on the spot where he laboured personally, but in many other towns of Italy. Many youths thus approached and encouraged by the kindness accorded to them by these worthy men conceived a taste for study; dissipation and idleness became hateful to them; they followed the dictates of virtue, and, in the hearts of many, true Christian principles were firmly established.

These youths, in their schools, excited emulation by their example among their fellow students, who were possessed of equal talent, and even those of inferior capacity were invited to greater efforts. Man is an imitative being, and, from the spirit of imitation, the students speedily assumed a new character. They themselves wondered at the metamorphosis, but scarcely knew how to explain the mystery.

In a few years Francesco's generous plan yielded ample results.\* Hundreds and hundreds of youths grew up in knowledge and virtue. The fruit was gradually increasing, while the world took no cognizance of the good effected. A single man thus worked more solid advantage to the cause of his country than a thousand conspirators need hope to accomplish. A single individual thus prepared thousands of torches to light the inextinguishable fire of the love of country, and aroused thousands to become the guardians of liberty, which is inevitably the concomitant of virtue. Men forgot, or passed unheeded, his self-sacrificing work, while they deified the ambitious who professed love of their country only with the hope of exalting themselves. Francesco, however, reaped an ample reward in his own bosom.

\* This diffusion of the love of science and liberty among the youth was noticed some years before the revolution of 1848, especially in the Lombardo Venetian province.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

ALL PERSONAGES OF THE DRAMA ARE THREE YEARS OLDER, BUT HAPPILY SUCH IS NOT THE CASE WITH EITHER READER OR AUTHOR.

FRANCESCO had pursued his plan for three years, and at length began to perceive its good effects in the reformation of entire cities. He sought not fame. His work was unobtrusive, and its effects modest. There were those, however, who in their hearts erected trophies to his praise, which redounded more to his glory than the most splendid testimonials which could be offered him by an enthusiastic multitude.

The priest of Rivalta received letters from him, and communicated the intelligence they

conveyed to the Countess Belfiore, who, with the reserve demanded by decorum, but with the most friendly consideration, hinted at his progress to the Countess Amalia.

Don Giuseppe had greatly lost his influence with her, and no longer governed her. But his influence over the Count increased in proportion as the health of the latter failed. The priest was in a state little short of despair, from being compelled to keep his love concealed in his breast. It was grown now to an absolute monomania. He was weary of himself and of life, not only from remorse, but in consequence of inaction, and its attendant inability to plot evil.

He passed his time in feigning piety with the Count, and talking religion with the Countess, seeking every possible means of rendering himself agreeable to her, whilst tormenting schemes of vengeance and hate were constantly passing through his brain. Fresh fuel seemed ever accumulating upon his desperate passion, which, arriving at times at its height, completely blinded him, and tempted him to invade the apartments of the Countess like a madman, carry her off

violently, and slay her and himself too ! Many times he was about to put his purpose into execution, but the strength of his understanding always triumphed over his excesses of passion.

Francesco felt sad, it is true, but he was no longer unhappy. His face had assumed an expression of magnanimity, united with placid melancholy. His heart was expanded and enlarged. His attractive conversation was again the charm of the society in which he moved. He was always pleasing and graceful, though never gay. With the fair sex he was courteous and gentle ; but the most lovely face was powerless to arouse a look of interest in him. In vain did the fiery glances of the Italian maidens fall thick upon him. Their darts, so fatal to others, were harmless to Francesco. Their ardour spent, they fell innocuous at his feet, without producing the slightest impression.



## CHAPTER XLV.

WHICH, IF JUDGED BY APPEARANCES, IS SADLY  
POVERTY-STRICKEN.

FOR two years the Alfredini family had passed the winter season at Venice, in order to exchange the sharp alpine atmosphere for the softer and more salubrious air of that city. The physicians had ordered the change for the Count, though they well knew it could not prolong his life more than a year or two. The family were of course accompanied by Don Giuseppe.

Francesco Fantoni had been for some time absent from Venice, travelling through Italy, and into foreign countries. He had established communications for the furtherance of his plans with many sincere patriots, and was making most successful progress. He had now returned,

and had been again lodged at Venice for a fortnight. He had no idea of the residence of the Count's family there, nor did the Countess know anything of his movements.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

WHICH, AS A FAVOURITE OF THE AUTHOR, IS  
COMMENDED TO THE SPECIAL REGARD OF  
THE READER.

THE curtain rises on a new scene. We find ourselves no longer surrounded by the magnificence of nature, but by the wonders of art—of art in her most powerful representations—in the manifestations of creation rather than of imitation. Nature can claim no direct share in these wonders ; they are due alone to art, though exalted by the force of creative genius, first inspired, it is true, by the contemplation of the sublimity of nature. Nature speaks with lofty and mysterious voice. Her appearance may be irregular and fantastic, or even deformed, by arbitrary proportions ; but her irregularity is

always subject to laws, and harmony and agreement which spring up from creation, and are intimately diffused throughout all created things. Here, where art does all, and nature has no share, is felt the charm of exquisite proportions, of form, of invaluable material, and disciplined boldness. The result is enchanting as a single and exceptional production, in which nature has had no share, except as she has served as the basis of art. Here art delights the eye, as nature charms by her magnificence elsewhere. Nature here gives so little, offers so little scope for imitation, that all is due to human intellect, which has invested ideas with the true harmony, and indued forms with proportions, the elements of which are always deduced from the economy of creation.

A city rises, as by enchantment, from the waters. No island offers the least support, no rock affords a base. Water, only water ; and below this a muddy stratum, a hundred feet thick, soft and shifting, is the only natural foundation. Blocks of wood, one pressing another down into the profound depth, another a third, and so on, by fifties and hundreds—many a

## CHAPTER

WHICH, AS A FAVORITE, and eastern spoils,  
 COMMENDED TO THE READER, the fruit of unwearied  
 stands alone in the world

which is not qualified by any  
 THE curtain superior to all qualification. Her  
 ourselves r churches, built of costly marble, are  
 nificance of stupendous art. The place teems  
 of art in force, spirit, and vivacity, and ever presents  
 the multiplied and novel amusements and recrea-  
 imits—confounding traditions, and the habits of  
 the free and corrupt city of a half century earlier,  
 with the dissipation and idleness attendant on  
 pranny and quenched liberty.

We are in the city of poetry and sweet  
 sounds, of gaiety, and activity, and the moving  
 to and fro of men. Men alone here fill up the  
 category of living beings, no animals being

its extent. In this city, in-  
 the far-famed poetic gondola  
 er, like a fish, familiar

THE PRIEST  
 AND THE  
 AND THE

asiasm and frivolity ;  
 ion ; of knight-errantry  
 city of generosity and mean-  
 virtues excited by the recollection  
 ories, of all the vices accompanying  
 ay which follows the prosperity of ages.  
 are in the city where ignorance and learning,  
 philosophy and prejudice, superstition and incre-  
 dulity, noble tendencies and grovelling pursuits,  
 struggling independence and the patience of the  
 slave, are wondrously blended together.

We are in the city which, expiating a long  
 season of corruption and abomination, is now  
 striving to arouse herself, and improve her con-  
 dition. May she become purified in the col-  
 lision between the relics of corruption, and the  
 felt necessity of restoration and reform, and  
 may the fruits of her efforts be holy and good !  
 We are at Venice.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

FANTASTIC REPRESENTATION EQUALLY CALCULATED TO EXCITE TEARS AND LAUGHTER.

THE place is magnificent. Lights, torches, glittering splendours, perfumes, and every description of beauty and luxury that the mind can imagine, or the heart desire to delight the senses. Buffets are crowded with cups, flagons and vases of precious metals, with ornaments of first-rate workmanship and splendour, and most marvellously carved;—vestments of gold, silver, and scarlet, brocaded, embroidered, and perfumed; rings, precious stones, and fine linen; magnificent stockings and mantles, and capes of the most exquisite taste, fine girdles, and sashes, and palls in abundance. Expert hands are not lacking to bedeck, adorn and beautify the high

personage who is the object of their attentive and devoted care. Can the place be the hall of a princely or royal palace? Can the ceremony be celebrated to present to the gaze of a wondering public a being to be regarded with fear and trembling, or with ecstasies of admiration? or is it a theatre wherein are displayed the most curious and wonderful scenes of life, both vulgar and refined—in caricature? Is the person about to be invested with this refulgent attire, a lovely woman, or a noble youth, beauteous as a goddess, or proud as a god? Is a Juno or a Jupiter to be presented to the world, a Venus or an Apollo? Are the assistant hands those of delicate waiting-maids, or the smooth hands of valets or dainty pages, on whom their lady occasionally bestows a furtive glance of secret sympathy? No. All these are worldly aids, creatures of sin. The place is a church. The automaton to be clad in priestly attire, decked out to conquer the hearts of maids and matrons, who can he represent? The face is wrinkled, the mouth falls in, the gums are toothless, the complexion faded, the figure wasted, and the hair, white as snow, is already giving place to the



haldness of the septuagenarian. The personage thus exposed to the gaze of multitudes is a Bishop, his valets are priests or canons, his pages clerks, in gown and cotta.

The great prelate appears; a reverend attendant delicately raises his vestment in front, that he may not stumble; a train-bearer sustains it behind. The attendants, as he passes, prostrate themselves on bended knee. One unbuttons his amice, another takes it off, and woe to him if a hair be ruffled! it is a crime of lese-episcopacy. One presents him with the golden basin to wash his hands, another the towel to wipe them. Another receives his cap, which, with the amice, is carefully laid aside, and covered with a costly veil. Another, or rather two, invest him with the alb, and here again care is required to avoid touching his hair. The law is strict, for the inconvenience might be great, if the individual wore a wig. Then follow the sash, the stole and cope—again the ceremonial formula adverts to care of the hair—the ring, maniple, and various other paraphernalia. All is accomplished by the reverend valets with the utmost respect, with genuflections at every turn, kissing of his hands

and vestment, with obsequious airs and graces, mopping and mowing in fawning servility, tripping and skipping hither and thither with many "an obedient start," and all the while grinning their adulation in almost audible smiles; and thus the old ape is dressed.

The hand of the author trembles lest it should have been guilty of vulgarity in bestowing upon his Lordship this appellation; but he trusts that, for once, taste may be sacrificed to the vivacity and truthfulness of the simile.

The ape, then, is dressed, presented to the people, admired and adored by languishing eyes, and contemplated with devotion by pious women. Thus travestied, he approaches the altar to celebrate mass.

The Bishop of Venice, the Patriarch, celebrated mass in the church of St. — on a festival day of great solemnity, in the year 184—. It was a fashionable church, to which persons of high rank flocked. Nor could this fail to be the case, for, according to custom, every means of attraction was resorted to, to draw people to the place. The solemnity, the torches, the prepara-

tion, the music, the priests, the female part of the audience attracting the other sex, and these, again, re-acting on those (in our times this mystery will be better understood than formerly, the theory of attraction being better explained), curiosity, idleness,—all are incentives sufficient to draw a concourse of people. It should be added, too, that a few old maids and bachelors, saints and bigots, nuns and friars at large—really come from a spirit of devotion, though their number is very limited. Some come to exhibit their handsome dresses, others their beautiful faces. Some come to win hearts, others to see their mistresses, whom they cannot meet elsewhere. Some are incited by a passion for music, some delight in the grand spectacle presented by torches, embroidery and decoration. These attractions are amply sufficient to induce forgetfulness of the true object of going to church—the object for which in the barbarous times churches were built.

Before proceeding to the point in relation with our story, we would glance at the persons here assembled, and draw a faithful picture. Let

not the reader be alarmed. It will not be a long story, though in some respects curious. It is a slight sketch after the manner of "The Devil on two Sticks."

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## PICTURE AFTER THE "DEVIL ON TWO STICKS."

WE know not, in other parts of the world, where the place is, in which Love transacts his affairs, where he points his dart, and where he plays with the hearts of poor mortals, tossing them to and fro as a boy plays with his ball. Elsewhere, we have never succeeded in discovering the spot. He may have secret hiding places, impenetrable to man's, or, at least, to a foreigner's investigation. Perhaps Love, in some parts of the world, has his workshop in offices and banks his instruments pens, his cement arithmetic, and there he may make his bow and arrows of gold, the bow more powerfully impelling the arrow in proportion as the gold is more weighty. He may have it in balls and theatres, in public and

private assemblies. We, who are profane observers, know not where, in other countries, he may hold it—but we do know that, in Italy, he establishes his trade in church. There he is exceedingly busy. There he toils and labours, there he sharpens the points of his arrows, there he takes aim, shoots, wounds, and slays—hearts; and then flies away laughing in boyish glee. Darts fly about in every direction—darts of women, darts of maidens, darts of bigots, darts of youths, darts of men both free and fettered. Even elderly ladies and old men try to shoot their arrows under cover of veils, and wigs, and false teeth, and rich curls—the spoils of more youthful heads—the defective busts of the women padded with womanly art, and the snowy beards of the men hidden by art and by the assumption of juvenility. Darts fly hither and thither, escaping as from confinement, crossing each other and frequently hitting the mark. Darts even emanate from the choir, from the venerable countenances associated with surplice, cotta, stole, and cap. The priests move and kneel, change place, position, and attitude with an art which puts to shame theatrical skill. Love casts

fiery darts from the church to the choir, from the choir to the church. Is not this truly his manufactory?

The young student of seventeen, of respectable but poor family, feels his fancy inflamed by the image of a noble and rich maiden. He passes whole hours under her window at night unobserved, meets her in her walks, and is not noticed. The young lady lives retired, and dares not look around her in the public ways. He follows her to church, and is noticed. The tender heart of the maiden experiences the effect of the youth's amorous glance, and her virgin breast flutters. Love quickly sharpens his arrow, and shoots it into her heart. The girl frequently neglects her book of devotion to cast a glance on the enamoured young man who stands near her, his eye fixed upon her. Thus inspired, after the service he hastens home to write tender eclogues. How the affair will end, it is impossible for us to say : the result stands written in the book of destiny.

Behold a pair of youthful lovers, girl and boy, who are sighing for each other most ardently. They have met with obstacles—but here he ap-

proaches her. He is kneeling, with his book in his hand, probably wrong way upwards, and they adroitly exchange *billets-doux*. Her attendant is either their accomplice, or old and intent upon her devotions, and hence either seeing she sees not, or she does not see at all. Their letters arrange a delightful rendez-vous.

A showy matron is accompanied by her devout husband, who is kneeling by her side. She is anything but devout, and, while he prays and meditates, and, with childish awe, regards the service, the choir, and the priests—the wife sees none of them, but is altogether intent upon dexterously exchanging glances with a robust, daring-looking young man, who seems a most heterogeneous element in the church. They have come to a mutual understanding, and will understand each other better still in the silence of the moonlight hour.

The coquette is found there, the maiden somewhat *passée* in despair at her want of success in securing a husband. She has tried theatres, balls, and parties unsuccessfully. Now she tries the church, and here, too, it may be thought, she will fail, among so many faces of more



fiery darts ; she succeeds here. the choir —a thorough church manufact observes her, notices her

The gazing eye—even this has its able h ed *célibataires*, and she will the i u woman, exulting in the title wh rning her husband. The church se become the place of her predilec- not where she made her fortune.

ably at church presents every variety . Severe beauty in plain attire, sparklingly gaily adorned ; conspicuous beauty modestly half-clad, displaying its lilies and and artfully allowing the mantle to escape a pair of well-rounded shoulders ; fresh beauty, still immature ; ripe and faded beauty, to say the least, beauty already on the wane ; all are admired, courted and flattered.

The young men, and indeed the men in general, think little of the service, and only of the beauties there assembled—either those specially, or not specially admired by them, either in the mass or taken individually.

The fair ones think alternately of the service, and of other matters. Glances of disquiet, of

desire, and of bold daring are cast in every direction. Some of the ladies are kneeling, while the men are all standing. They would not willingly have it appear that they are in church for the purpose of devotion, but wish it clearly to be seen that it is alone for amusement they come. What charm would the church possess for them, were it not that it contained women, and very often beauties hitherto hidden from them?

All are not Catholics among these lady-killers, nor all Christians even in name. Most of them are infidels, though born in a so-called Christian land, but among them are many Jews, shining in all the luxury of Ganymedes. Even they, in a Christian Church, assume the manners of Christians, and, if not betrayed by their countenances as Hebrews, lay snares for the Christian beauties, and sometimes succeed in entrapping them.

Now is it not true that the church is, in Italy, Love's workshop, whence he industriously issues his large and inexhaustible stock of darts? Nor is this all. The choir are not spared by the lawless fellow who intrudes himself everywhere, even among priests, during the

hours consecrated to their ceremonial performances. They are but mortals, and even they have hearts placed in their breasts, that they may love. Even they are made of flesh and blood, and they do love. The smoke of the incense which diffuses itself around, adds to the confusion of their brains, produced by the dazzling splendour of the ceremonial. The vestments, though sacerdotal, and made for religious purposes, excite the vanity of these reverends, and powerfully attract and seduce the female eye. Splendours of gold, and silk, and embroidery ever enchant the eye of woman, and the priest, being clad in these precious fabrics, the women are then naturally enchanted with the priests. The music, too, excites the senses—sweet, profound, melancholy, and touching. The most impassioned operatic airs, expressing love's tenderest sentiments, are performed upon the organ and other instruments. At the time of the elevation—when the host is no longer bread, and the cup no longer filled with wine, but in them is displayed divinity itself—at that moment the musical *artistes* rob theatrical productions of all that is most rapturous and most tender in

the scenes depicting lovers in their most unhallowed transports. Yes, these very airs are performed at that moment. The tender female heart melts with emotion. The church is magic ground truly! The music, the perfume of the incense, the singing so elaborate, and the voices of the young priests so penetrating and sympathetic, attract the eyes of girls and women to the amiable faces of romantic reverends, who, with long hair, impassioned expression, and elegant gestures are all-powerful in awakening in the female breast the liveliest sensations of spiritual tenderness—which often terminates in earthly affection. These affections are shared by the priests; and from the choir are cast responsive looks, and the devotion of the devotees towards them far exceeds that which they pay to the Divinity. The air vibrates with the impression of the looks of intelligence passed between some pair—and at that moment a handsome young priest, with gentle air and angelic face, goes round with the purse, collecting alms to supply the wants of the church, which are the wants of her ministers; and the crafty parish priest sends the handsomest and youngest, the most richly adorned,

the one most likely to awaken sympathy. Experience shows that such an one succeeds far better than any other, and gathers money because these dear devotees, these sweet, lovely women give more willingly to him than to the old, ugly, and repulsive. To receive the money in the purse, the priest must stop, and it is natural that, if a beauty be disgusted by the ungainly looks of a priest, she is little disposed to retain him for her offering, and that, in the contrary case, she gives from honest and pious sympathy. The handsome young priest perhaps receives the alms from one he knows, and who knows him, and the hand which presents the purse, and the hand which gives the money, both tremble, because they are accustomed tremblingly to touch elsewhere, when the two are alone and unperceived.

The reader, we hope, will now agree that this chapter is not improperly denominated a "Scene from the Devil on two Sticks."

## CHAPTER XLIX.

WE PASS FROM THE UNKNOWN TO THE KNOWN  
—THREE FAMILIAR PERSONAGES IN CHURCH,  
AND WHAT FOLLOWS.

AMONG the number of spectators of this representation might be observed, standing near the seats disposed along the nave, on a slightly-raised platform, a young man of noble appearance and serious and dignified countenance, displaying strong marks of genius. His face wore an unaccustomed air of severity, as if contracted with disgust and sorrow. His eye was fixed upon the great altar with a mixed expression of derision and compassion, and melancholy bitterness of feeling at the degrading spectacle before him. He watched the unceasing evolutions, manœuvres, genuflexions, and adorations paid

to a sinful man, raised by his fellow-creatures to the altar, instead of God, and adored in his place. God himself he beheld impiously worshipped in a sensible, material, organic appearance, the production of the earth, rendered fertile by means too revolting to contemplate. To his unprejudiced mind it seemed too absurd that the people should believe that God condescends to assimilate with the human body, and submit to the ordinary transformations of food. So nutritious, indeed, is the composition that in the lives of the saints we have examples by the thousand of pious men and women who have lived for weeks and months, and even years, on the bread of the communion, as thin as a common wafer. Nor would this be difficult of belief were the communion a formal and substantial banquet as in the early ages of the church. These transformations most assuredly put to shame the numberless mythological absurdities; nor can any of the latter, however monstrous and ridiculous, rival the impious conceit of the former.

The young man with anger and anguish of soul, said to himself, "And this religion pretends to be the religion of Christ!" The reader

has already recognised Francesco in the critic. Passing the church by chance, from the spirit of observation and study, he was induced to enter.

Among those kneeling upon the benches, devoutly absorbed with the liveliest devotion of belief, was one most beautiful among the beauties of the place. She was not one of those who glance and flirt, one of the observed and courted—not because she was unworthy to be among the most observed and admired ; but her head was bowed low over her book, and her veil almost concealed her face, so that she could scarcely be recognised. She was one of those who had come to church from a spirit of pure devotion. She looked upon the Bishop as a saint ; she admired the ceremonies as most sublime, and considered the music well adapted to raise the mind in religious ecstasy towards the Most High. The priests moving around the richly-bedecked prelate, she regarded as ministering angels. Nor did she notice, meanwhile, their roving eyes, their glances distracted from the ceremonies of the altar, and attracted towards the daughters of men, nor yet the pretension of



their attitudes. Her heart was too single to notice these. She observed the ceremonial and reasoned not ; if she thought at all, it was with the enthusiastic fervid illusion of misguided piety. Doubtless other women and maidens there congregated resembled her in some degree, but their hearts were less pure and their faith less simple. The beauty of beauties in this assembly was the Countess Amalia Alfredini.

Strange combination ! The two lovers are the one beside the other in church. The one believes with superstitious blindness, the other, too, believes, but is far from believing in these histrionic impostures,—in this comedy, as it might be called, were it not too impious for a comedy. In such diverse attitudes and dispositions of mind did the most noble of the Italian youth, the most beauteous of Italian women, meet in church at the celebration of Pontifical mass. Diverse though they were in attitude, how great the sympathy between them ! Though so opposite apparently, their hearts were united. Each was ignorant of the presence of the other, though their minds were occupied about each other. She thought of him, as usual, in her prayers,

and offered her love as a sacrifice to God. She prayed for him fervently, and without the least fear of committing evil. Ought she not to pray for her enemies and the unbelieving? Why should she not pray, then, on behalf of her dearest friend, that God would concede to him His grace and benediction? He thought of her with a placid and melancholy sentiment of grief, not wrathful, nor insupportable, nor despairing, but still most acute and profound. "These," thought he, "are the arts by which her heart is seduced, her mind deluded; her heart, which is entirely mine, but separated from me for ever by the influence of these theatrical representations—by this blasphemy." He thus meditates with profound bitterness, aggravated by reflections upon the darkness in which men's minds are involved by the pernicious influence of deceitful priests to gain dominion over the will, the heart, and the purse of so many of both sexes. Thus they are engrossed in thinking of each other, little dreaming that they are so near together. Their souls, however, most assuredly feel the contact—for each experiences an emotion, a tenderness, a mysterious, inde-

their attitudes. Her heart was t<sup>es.</sup>  
 notice these. She observed the<sup>sual</sup>  
 reasoned not; if she thought<sup>ough</sup>  
 the enthusiastic fervid ill<sup>ader, is in</sup>  
 piety. Doubtless other<sup>ong the actors,</sup>

there congregated reser<sup>ce and cope, enve-</sup>  
 but their hearts were<sup>less simple.</sup> The<sup>as, he, too, is engaged</sup>  
 assembly was the<sup>monial operations.</sup> Thus

Strange com<sup>imposing and severe, with</sup>  
 the one besid<sup>god, with head erect and lofty</sup>  
 believes wit<sup>He is the cynosure of attraction to</sup>  
 too, believ<sup>in one beauty.</sup> Young priests, of  
 trionic; <sup>as</sup> appearance, may be considered most  
 be cal<sup>imate.</sup> They are admired by ladies both of  
 In<sup>and serious temperament; by the one from</sup>  
 m<sup>spiritual motives, by the other with worldly ad-</sup>  
<sup>miration.</sup> The enjoyers of this lower world  
 attract not the regard of the devotee, whose  
 looks, if the truth must be told, are most  
 caressing and bewitching, and their *æillades*  
 are for the fortunate priests who are adepts in  
 attracting them. But though so many favoured  
 him with their glances—the one most beautiful  
 of all, who, more than all the rest together,

gaze, seemed quite indifferent to  
gazed at her as much as he  
than prudence warranted,—  
atiable. Whether it were  
asic, of the luxury displayed,  
or, perhaps more than all, of the  
posed upon him by the place and  
tainly he felt his heart more than ever  
n to her; he felt to love her more than  
ever; his passion more than ever lacerated his  
breast. Fits of maddened love and desperate  
frenzy assailed him, tempting him to rush  
through the crowd with arms extended, and  
bear her off to the end of the world. He felt a  
fire more devouring and inextinguishable than  
ever. His she should become, he declared,  
though heaven and earth should oppose. Po-  
niard or narcotic in hand, his he would make  
her,—by seduction or violence, his she should be.  
During this delirious dream, the Mass was cele-  
brated. He assisted with apparent composure.  
His attitudes were perhaps less studied than  
usual, but his face was perfectly impassible.  
He was matchless in the art of assuming a rigid,  
unexpressive, and immoveable deportment, at

the moment that his soul was agitated by its most violent storms. The only perceptible difference was, that his face was paler and his eye more feverish, and the latter was a fresh attraction to his beauteous admirers throughout the church.

At length his eyes turned from the figure of the Countess in her kneeling position, and rested upon a form which seemed to him that of a demon. Truly Francesco Fantoni was a demon in the sight of Don Giuseppe, and doubly so at that moment! Oh! what would he have paid to change his nature, and, uttering a howl of rage, to fall upon and rend his enemy, tearing his heart from his breast, and crushing it as a sweet morsel between his teeth!

Francesco did not see him. He saw the assembly as a whole, remarked the movements of the crowd, saw what passed, but did not trouble himself to examine countenances; indeed, it was difficult to recognise faces through the glittering disguise of the ceremony.

Don Giuseppe saw that Francesco and Amalia were unaware of each other's presence. Had they seen one another, very different would have

the attitude, and the expression  
with which the priest re-  
virement of Francesco's  
Happily he was un-  
ent, his services not being  
could follow the movements  
risking the accusation of care-  
awkwardness in the ceremonies.  
ass continued, and he hoped it would  
and they would not see each other. It  
as more than half over, and their eyes had not  
met; it was on the point of concluding, and—  
they saw each other! She, by chance, turned  
her head for a moment, and he at the same  
instant looked in her direction. Though he  
could scarcely catch a glimpse of her face, so  
thickly was it veiled, yet he saw and recognized  
her. She too saw and knew him. Who can  
condemn them if their hearts were perturbed?  
if their eyes were fixed an instant or two, or even  
longer, the one upon the other, as by a charm?  
if her heart beat wildly, as though it would  
escape from her beautiful bosom? if his manly  
breast experienced a commotion and tumult in-  
describable? if a combination of delight and

tenderness, and on her part, of fear, agitated them both almost to the limit of vital endurance? She was ready to faint. He, strong as he was, was compelled to move a step to support himself against a pillar. This tumult of affection and surprise lasted but a few moments, so that the bystanders, with one exception, saw nothing of it. Her lofty soul quickly found support in her virtue, his in its innate strength. On a rapid examination of her ever-timorous conscience, she found nothing to occasion self-reproach, no reason for fear or shame. She saw it pure as that of a spirit, took comfort, and her beauteous face assumed an expression of serenity and celestial benignity altogether unmixed with earthly affection.

He restrained his emotion, feeling he had no reason to blush, no cause for self-upbraiding. He felt himself nerved with the strength of the valiant and generous, and shook his head slightly, as the proud war-horse under excitement. His countenance assumed a masculine, noble expression of devoted and lofty affection. His eye sparkled with love, but at the same time with pride, like that of one who felt him-

self not unworthy of a holy love, because he loved with a pure affection.

With their eyes they saluted each other, though not with their eyes alone. Amalia, with the assurance that she was doing nothing guilty or improper with the firmness of one whose conscience is tranquil, and with the courtesy inspired by her gentleness of heart, hesitated not to incline her head modestly, and shape her lips to a slight smile of ineffable sweetness. She gave him a salute that an angel clad in her form might have bestowed. He gently acknowledged her salutation, slightly casting down his eyes. His heart was filled with sweetness which would last fresh in his memory for years and years.

That recognition would certainly not be re-proved by God. A human eye saw it however, and reproved it, and desired to take vengeance for it—the eye of Don Giuseppe. The Countess veiled herself still more closely, and again gave herself up to fervent prayer; this time more of the heart than of the lips. The service finished, and the young man retired, without attempting again to see her, or meet her glance. He re-



tired to enjoy the recollection of this delightful meeting. What need of another look, when this had given him life, had rendered him happy for years to come? Amalia, on seeing him leave, felt grateful for his delicate discretion, and loved him better than ever, but with a yet more holy affection.

## CHAPTER L.

THE HAND OF THE ENGINEER LOSES ITS CUNNING, AND IS NO LONGER EQUAL TO ITS REQUIREMENTS.

WE will not describe the revolting scene of Don Giuseppe's fury. He hated men, the world, and the entire universe, and would have crushed the whole human race with the embrace of death. He hated in every man not only that which seemed to make him happier than himself, but he envied him his misfortunes. He hated the poor countryman for his happy ignorance, which spares him so many of the troubles that man in a more elevated state creates for himself. He envied the artizan the poverty and sacrifices of his life, because they were nothing in comparison with his grief. He

tired to enjoy the recollection of his as sparing meeting. What need of a nourishing this had given him life, but those frivolity of for years to come? Most powerful im- leave, felt grateful for others their natural loved him better than they. He even envied the holy affection. The calm and excitement of his , and he envied the dissipation at intoxication of the drinker. He one, not only his happiness, but his believing there was no wretchedness his. And he was right, for there was man so wicked on the face of the unless another of his own class could be found, wearing, like him, the abhorred priestly vestment.

Amalia was no longer his victim, and had almost emancipated herself. She was no longer superstitious, at least, not weakly and passively so, as she used to be. To preserve even the remnant of power he possessed over her mind, he must smile upon her, accord with her, submit to her almost as a slave, and be content to flatter her fatal passion, at least by maintaining an indulgent silence: and therefore it was out of the

him to attempt to upbraid her for  
She would rebel against him, not  
of mind, but from security of

the Count against her by insinuating  
ions and jealousy, was clearly impossible: be-  
es the Count was now in such a state of feeble-  
ness that he had lost all energy, if he ever had any,  
and scarcely an element of life remained to him.  
And then, knowing nothing of love, he could, of  
course, know nothing of jealousy. He did not  
love, he only admired, and moved by admiration  
alone, he would never be jealous, nor would it be  
easy to arouse in his mind suspicion of any kind  
against his wife. Hence Don Giuseppe felt  
powerless, as far as Amalia was concerned.

But against Francesco was he equally so?  
Must he there too renounce all hopes of ven-  
geance? What could he undertake with any hope  
of success? What snares could he lay to ruin  
him? How poison yet more the springs of his  
existence? He would gladly see him dis-  
honoured and despised, but it seemed to him  
impossible.

The ability and ill will of a single individual

he felt could effect nothing against his reputation, already established and immaculate. Cause him to be suspected by the ecclesiastical power, and raise a religious persecution against him? Impossible; for the Austrian states, although subject to political tyranny, were not then subject to religious persecution. Under their domination, cruel as it was, the holy inquisition did not exist, and if heresy was not permitted to be preached, at least it could be privately practised without molestation; but since the Concordat with Rome it is otherwise. Raise a political persecution against him? Cause him to be suspected by the police? Fabricate accusations? But how? He was far-sighted and prudent, and never allowed the least play for suspicion. It was indeed a difficult work. Francesco was always absent, and the priest had not the means, nor did it occur to him to have a spy to follow the hated rival, and watch him in his travels. Money, accomplices, and many accessories besides would be required to set a watch on the actions of such a man. He was cautious, and surrounded by friends and defenders, who rendered his actions impenetrable

to the eye of spies. Fabricate a false political accusation against him, and submit it to the consideration of the government? Out of the question! What could he say, and what could he prove? Whom could he find as a witness? Austria, before the revolution, maintained a hypocritical appearance of legality in its political prosecutions and condemnations. Whom would he bring forward as accuser, and how prove his allegations? No. Every means failed him. He could not ruin his enemy—could not revenge himself. He could imagine no plot against the woman so fatal to his peace, to conquer and make her his own!

## CHAPTER LI.

WHEN COUNSEL FAILS, VIOLENCE MUST BE  
RESORTED TO.

DON GIUSEPPE was not the man to allow himself to be overcome. In the deepest depression of his mind he felt force and energy within him. In the most serious disarrangement of the machinery of his plans he would provide new springs to repair the mischief, and set them again in motion. A thought flitted across his mind, arising from the consciousness of his own strength—a thought excited by the evil spirit which had possession of him and governed him. Raising his head suddenly, as if defying fate, he said to himself, “Why should I remain in this state of shameful inactivity without making any advance? Have I not now for five years been

childishly weeping and wearing away my life in adoration for this slave, looking at her as at a sylph, without daring to touch the border of her ærial garment? For five years I have been uttering schoolboys' complaints, repeating the elegiac lamentations of a helpless *innamorato*, who stands for hours at night under the window of his Dulcinea, sighing to the nocturnal breeze, and quarrelling with the stars because the balcony is closed, nor does he ever see it open. The time is past for weeping over a boyish love. My love is invincible, all-powerful, for ever overwhelming my mind, my faculties, my body, my whole self. Well, shall I always continue to remain at her side with doting eye and sighing attitude? Where is the energy of my nature? Where is the power of my will? Shall I never find the means of conquering this silly little saint, who escapes like a fish from my hand every time that I try to secure her? Is she not made of flesh and blood, and am I not handsome and powerful enough to compel a woman to love me, or at least to inspire her with the momentary delirium of love? Why should I not reap the fruit of so much pains, so much passion, so much an-



guish? For her, for this fatal woman, I have lost the chance of a brilliant career; I have lost the best years of my life, the love of my mother, and in proportion public esteem. For this woman's sake I have excited enemies all around me; and now she has cost me so much, shall I be contented with sighing near her, and nothing more? No. She shall pay the price of my sufferings—she shall be mine against the world, against heaven, and in spite of herself! Mine she shall be by cunning or violence. Mine, if I had to drag her with me to the infernal regions, and embrace her in the depths of the abyss; mine, if I had to make a covenant with hell; mine, in the midst of tempests and raging elements, and the crash of thunders; mine she shall be, however piercing her shrieks, however desperate the ruin to me; mine, by love or violence; mine, without strength to resist me! Mine she shall be! I swear it by heaven and hell! I swear it by my love and my despair! Mine she shall be!

## CHAPTER LII.

MARVELLOUS TRANSFORMATIONS OF A PROTEUS  
IN PRIESTLY TOGA.

THIS impious counsel matured, Don Giuseppe went at once to the apartment of the Countess. The apartments of ladies are more accessible to priests than to any one else. There was no need of ceremony in causing himself to be announced. A slight knock sufficed, and without waiting for an answer he entered.

The Countess was seated upon an ottoman in the semi-abandonment of a pre-occupation, neither agitated nor sad, but dream-like and serious. The occurrence of the day had certainly excited her heart. A rebellious sentiment of tenderness had awoke in her breast rather too intense to comport with the lofty virtue of the Countess

Alfredini. She tried, however, conscientiously to restrain the too fervid pulsation of her heart. She pressed her hand to her lovely bosom to still its throbbing, and succeeded ; for she raised her eyes to heaven, and murmured a supplication which heaven was pleased to hear and answer. She felt herself tranquillised, and at that moment Don Giuseppe entered.

His visit was certainly somewhat inopportune, but she experienced no great degree of displeasure, because her conscience was tranquil. She motioned to him gracefully, though with slight severity, to take a seat, which he did. He entered with an air of greater assurance than usual ; not with the ostentatious air of piety habitual to him, but with dignified composure, yet with the air of a man of the world, approaching to do homage to a beautiful woman. His countenance assumed an expression of serenity as if he were quite at his ease, and felt under no restraint in her presence. Perhaps this air was not displeasing to her ; it might seem to her less hypocritical and cunning. He perceived the favourable impression, and with a frank gallantry which seemed to make him quite

another man, seated himself by her side, and said—

“What did your ladyship think of the service to-day?”

She replied, “All went off well, and it was most magnificent.”

Thus saying, she slightly blushed, but tried to appear composed and secure. She no longer feared his inquisitorial observation nor scrutinizing eye.

“You had a singular meeting in church,” he said, carelessly, and without severity, but not without a slightly bitter curl of his lip.

“Yes, a very pleasant meeting,” answered she, “although one I was far from expecting.”

“The mountains stand still,” said he, with crafty allusion to the past, “but men meet.”

“That is very often true,” said the Countess, evasively.

“It would be better sometimes, however,” added he, boldly and without any pretension to piety of manner, “that the mountains should meet and men stand still.”

“Perhaps so,” answered the Countess, slightly piqued, “but I do not see how your argument

can be deduced from the occurrence of to-day."

"And yet," answered he with provoking art, "if any one could look into your breast he would be disposed to think otherwise."

"Don Giuseppe," answered the lady quickly, but still kindly, "you ought not to make such an observation; it is very wrong thus to disturb my peace of mind."

"I do not think any observations of mine could disturb your peace, if your conscience were tranquil."

"Were I to encourage the feeling that you arouse in my breast, I should say, Don Giuseppe," answered she, firmly, "that yours is an unwelcome intrusion into the concerns of my heart, that no man has any right to attempt, except my confessor. I will say to you, however—for I believe that you speak to me from a right motive, and without any evil intention, that my conscience in this respect is perfectly tranquil."

"Your conscience deceives you, my lady; your affection is still deep, and you make not the necessary efforts to conquer it. The Coun-

tess Alfredini ought to remember the past and fear for the future."

"I remember the past only to assure myself that I have nothing with which to reproach myself at present. The past was folly, the present is nothing more than a laudable interest I feel in a worthy person."

"But why are you unwilling to listen to the counsel of a friend, unless it is your passion which prevents you?"

"I once listened to the counsel of one I believed to be my friend; and now I am very doubtful whether he was my friend," said she, severely.

"And is he not your friend?" exclaimed the priest, his eyes emitting flames of love and wrath at the same instant. "He who took such pains to save an inexperienced girl, who renounced a high career because he loved her so warmly, that he desired to save her from danger? who employed his wisdom, which is not slight, and set in motion all the energy of his nature for no other end than to preserve for the Lord his elect daughter? who felt for her an affection so strong, that he watched over her

day and night ; that for her he sacrificed his hours of repose, for her underwent sorrow and mortal anguish ? Is he not a friend who made her the mistress of a rich house, who induced a pious, generous man to submit to her like a child ? who surrounded her with honour and riches, and, more than all, made her acceptable to God ?”

“ True,” said the unhappy Countess, moved almost to tears, “ but he took from her the greatest good she possessed in life—and all this is nothing in comparison with her great loss.”

“ Yes,” answered he, drawing nearer to her, taking her hand and fixing his fiery eyes upon her face. “ Yes, this friend saw her on the edge of the precipice, and called to her to retrace her steps, although he well knew that he should incur hatred and contempt in consequence. He received an affront from a dying woman only from this cause—but he blessed, notwithstanding, the departing soul. He had to bear the calumny of the world—but he cared not, and courageously followed his calling, which was that of redeeming an angel. This friend interested himself in the unhappy woman day and

night, night and day thought only of her and her safety. All the strength of his intellect was exerted to shield her from the dangers which, unknown to her, surrounded her. He thought only of her, and neglected other souls to attend to hers. Nothing occupied his mind or heart but her. For her he groaned, for her he wept. To her he consecrated his every thought and all his cares with the affection of a parent, a brother, a husband,—almost as if he were born for her alone, as if for her alone he inspired the breath of life, as if for her alone Heaven had given him intelligence.”

The Countess was completely overcome as by a spell, with her sentiment of gratitude ; but she saw not the burning eye which he fixed upon her with devouring intensity, nor did she understand the double sense of his words, which were the outburst of furious passion under a hypocritical disguise. She felt, however, frightened and overpowered. He, foolish man ! mistook her gushing gratitude for the sentiment of new-born love.

He approaches her yet more closely, and regards her with the tenderest emotion. His eye,



now winning and gentle, had never before been so softened, not even when an innocent child he returned the caresses of his mother. She seemed really spell-bound under their influence. She feels that she has been harsh and unjust towards one who is, indeed, a faithful friend! And he encircles her waist with his arm, and she, under the influence of his spell, submits, surprised by a sudden feeling of tenderness. He presses her to his side, and murmured in her ear words that instil venom into her heart. "I will ever be thine, my Amalia—thine for life—to thee devoted body and soul. I will never think of another. I will never bestow a look on any but thee. I will think of nothing but pleasing thee."

His words sounded terrible to her innocent heart. It seemed to her that her form was enveloped in the folds of a serpent. She felt his frame tremble against her with passionate convulsion. The genius of sin and death seemed to surround and embrace her. Horrified and with the impulse of indignation, she released herself from the contact of his profane arm. She rose, stood face to face with him, lifted her

head majestically, her eye emitted flames of noble indignation, and her face paled with alarm and offended virtue, though her countenance was more expressive of contempt than any other feeling.

In a moment, the past recurred to her, and she read plainly as in a book. She saw persons and things clearly as in a picture, and Don Giuseppe stood before her as the leader, the impersonation of evil, the man of sin, who works iniquity to effect the misery of mankind. She now clearly saw the nature of his frenzied, abominable passion, and trembled within herself. On him she cast a look as of divination, which seemed to penetrate his soul, and she read the most horrible revelations, written in infernal characters, on his brow. At her glance, he felt fear. For the second time he trembled beneath a look. It is an attribute of secret crime to render even the boldest and most hardened man a coward. He sees himself lost, but he will not yield. He prostrates himself before her on his knees, with a cry of desperation. At that moment, he is on the point of confessing his love, and declaring that, if repulsed, he feels

himself impelled to crime. He is on the borders of madness, and is capable of the most execrable violence. She looks down upon him with an expression of contempt. Now she clearly sees the villany marked in his countenance, and experiences both horror and fear. She approaches the bell, and extends her hand. Woe to him if she rings, and the servants enter the room to receive her commands! He fears not the poor innocent husband, but he fears the relations and friends of Amalia, who are principally persons of honourable position and influence, and are far from being kindly disposed towards him, and he fears Francesco, too.

He changes his tactics. With the utmost artifice, and the most revolting meanness, he suddenly alters the expression of his face. From the fiery fury of passion and bitter irony and contempt, with the readiness of a comedian, he changes it to the most piteous expression. His eyes again assume a look of celestial gentleness, his forehead seems to glow with an expression of tender grief—a tear starts from his eye, and his voice is modulated to accents of pity. The Countess is quite bewildered. It

seems an illusion that his face can ever have worn the demoniacal appearance it presented so recently, and she hardly can believe in the sudden transformation. It is but the work of a moment. Her hand is on the bell-rope, she is about to ring, she hesitates. He, in accents of the bitterest reproach, of tender compassion, and spiritual melody, exclaims—

“ Stop! stop! the evil one deprives you of your senses, and bewilders your faculties. You fear me, the saviour of your soul. I feel, it is true, the warmest affection for you—a heavenly, a Christian affection. Mine is the affection of the priest, the minister of God, for the soul placed under his care. I feel that your soul is committed to me, and my life is devoted to save it. I am in the world for this object alone, and your soul is more precious to me than aught besides. It will cause joy in heaven, when it is purified from the earthly affection which still too much engrosses it. Prostrate as I am at this moment, I have prayed the Lord, times without number, to touch your heart, because I see this guilty love so deeply rooted there, and I have now no hope that it will ever be conquered, save

by a miracle of grace. I have still more despaired of your repentance, since I have observed that you have ceased to accuse yourself, and sleep secure and tranquil in your passion, as if it were innocent. I now conjure you, by the love of our Saviour—I conjure you in the name of Mary and the saints to think of your soul, which is more than ever in danger. Upon my knees, I conjure you. Indeed, unhappy woman, my love is immense and immeasurable, but altogether connected with my interest in your eternal salvation, and I weep over you with the true affection of a brother or a father, and can never cease to pray for you.”

Thus saying, he arose, wiped the tears from his eyes and hypocritical face, and pretended to make an effort to compose himself. Can the reader believe it? The Countess was still under his spell. She believed the insidious words of this demon. She thought that she laboured under a delusion in believing so much evil of him in the past and at present. She believed, too, in the perilous state of her soul. It now seemed to her that his clasping her waist was an innocent act, for great liberties are allowed to

priests, as devotees well know. She believed too that it was a diabolical delusion that she had seen his face clothed in the revolting aspect of frenzied passion. She believed him a saint, and herself an obstinate sinner. What will not a devotee believe under the influence of a cunning priest ?

Still her faith was not entirely blind ; a slight shade of doubt remained, though a doubt that she dared not encourage. She felt it prudent to close the interview, her position being too equivocal and difficult after the frightful scene which had just taken place. With a voice of emotion and benignity, she said, " Don Giuseppe, I believe you my true friend, and hope that I shall continue to receive consolation from you ; but now I wish to be alone to collect my thoughts, to pray and reflect upon the state of my soul. Another time I will advise with you farther."

Don Giuseppe kissed her hand, and retired.

END OF VOL. II.



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